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HISTORY  
OF  
THE DIOCESE OF MEATH

BY  
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*Rector of Kells, and Canon of St. Patrick's, Dublin*

WITH  
A PREFACE  
BY  
THE BISHOP OF MEATH

IN TWO VOLUMES

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VOL. I.

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DUBLIN:  
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## PREFACE.

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It is with great pleasure that I comply with the request to write a brief Foreword to this Diocesan History.

A writer well-known in the field of literature says :—  
“History, if it be only true, is, to my thinking, the most interesting of studies ; and no novel or story-book gives me so much pleasure as the finding out what actually has happened to those who have gone before us in the world.” The many who by residence and family or other connection have their interests and affections bound up with the Diocese of Meath will, I am sure, heartily welcome this record of “what actually has happened to those who have gone before them.”

But these volumes will appeal to a wider circle. The observation of the late Sir William Wilde to the effect that “the History of Ireland might be written in tracing the banks of the Boyne” indicates that a History of the Diocese of Meath must possess value for all who seek acquaintance with the story of the past of our country. Nowhere were the interests of Church and State more closely interwoven. Meath

originally formed a separate Province, and in recognition of its eminence as the Royal Kingdom of Meath was constituted a Palatinate Bishopric, a distinction that no other Bishopric in the United Kingdom can claim, save that of Durham.

The late Professor Stokes, who did so much to popularise the study of Irish Church History by the publication of his Lectures on the Celtic and Anglo-Norman Church, was ever keen in the contention that a History of the Diocese of Meath ought to be written. Some five-and-twenty years ago he published in the *Meath Diocesan Magazine* a few papers suggestive of what was to be desired. Sketches of the history of individual parishes followed. The present work in its ample reference to authorities will furnish great assistance to those who desire to write such local histories, but the purpose which Canon Healy has set before him is one which in its achievement must prove of much wider interest—namely, to offer a general view of the state of the Diocese, illustrated by the most striking incidents occurrent in its several parts, in the successive periods of History.

In the Celtic period we read of the labours of St. Patrick and St. Columba, and of the work accomplished in the schools of Clonard and Clonmacnoise.

In the Anglo-Norman times we read the story of the Castles and the Abbeys, the ruins of which form so conspicuous a feature in the landscape of many districts in Meath.

In the mediæval period the internal conflicts of Church and State which culminated in the Reformation movement and the dissolution of the monasteries receive ample illustration.

The singular and entangled controversies of the seventeenth century are duly set forth, and the later developments of pre-Disestablishment and post-Disestablishment times are recorded until the History brings us down to our own days. The process of evolution which has left as its result the conditions under which our Church now exists has thus been well portrayed, and the strange vicissitudes of the past with its occasions for regret or for thankfulness cannot but afford to any thoughtful mind food for reflection which may prove helpful in grappling with the problems of the future.

Those who have attempted kindred work will best realise the debt of gratitude due to Canon Healy for the patience, the industry, and the skill which he has displayed in culling from so many sources the curious and instructive details which make up the story. Few would now endorse the sentiment attributed, I think, to Lord Melbourne, that the writing of History is the literary task which makes least demands upon the faculties of an author.

To discriminate between false and true, to weigh evidence, to select the essential and important elements out of a mass of crude material found in hitherto unpublished manuscripts and recorded after the



uninspiring manner of the *Annals of the Four Masters*, to assimilate and digest the contents, and invest the whole with human interest—all this is surely no slight task to undertake.

Those who peruse these pages will, I am persuaded, be convinced that Canon Healy possesses these qualifications in no small measure, and will join with me in congratulating him on the success with which he has accomplished so arduous a labour of love.

J. B. MEATH.

# CONTENTS.



## CHAPTER I.

### FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

Page

Ancient Kingdom of Meath—Its importance—Saint Patrick— Foundation of Trim—Preaching at Tara—Slane—the Shamrock—Donaghpatrick—Tribal form of Church Government—Churches founded by St. Patrick ..	I
---	---

## CHAPTER II.

### COMPANIONS OF SAINT PATRICK.

Sechnall of Dunshaughlin—his Hymn—Cairnech of Dulane— the Misach—Kenan of Duleek—early association with Patrick—Erc of Slane—Trena of Kildalkey—Munis of Forgney—Loman of Portloman and Trim ..	10
--	----

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SCHOOLS OF CLONMACNOISE AND CLONARD.

Age of Scholars—Description of an Irish "School"—Finian of Clonard—the three classes of Irish Saints—the Yellow Plague—Later History of Clonard—Keiran of Clonmac- noise—Credibility of Irish Historical Documents— Remarkable Test—Traditions—Death of Keiran—King Diarmaid—Antiquities at Clonmacnoise ..	17
--	----

## CHAPTER IV.

### DURROW AND KELS.

Two great Missionaries—Columbanus—his Monastic Reforms —Columkill—his Early Life—his Ordination—Bishop Etchen of Clonfad—Columban Abbots mostly Priests, not Bishops—Durrow—its Foundation—Bede—Kels— Columkill's Lorica—Iona—connection with Kels—the Book of Kels—Book of Durrow—High Crosses—Round Towers—Crozier of Kels and Durrow ..	29
--	----

## CHAPTER V.

## THE CELTIC PERIOD.

Three Periods of Irish Church History—Ardraccan—Ultan— Fechin of Fore—Barind the Voyager—Carthage of Ra- han—Lynally—Trevet—Balrathboyne—Skryne—Mixed Monasteries—the Norsemen—Turgesius at Clonmacnoise —National Assembly at Rahugh—Beginnings of Diocesan Episcopacy—Church Property—Charters in the Book of Kells—Vindictive Character of the Irish Saints—Influence of the Danes on the Irish Church— Introduction of the Cisterians—Synod of Kells— Cardinal Paparo—Meath formed into a Diocese ..	43
---	----

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE CONQUEST.

Invitation from the King of Leinster—Strongbow—Conquest of Meath—Hugh de Lacy—his Position in Meath—Death of Tiernan O'Rorke—Founding of Abbeys—"Appropriations" —Exclusion of Irish—Appointment of Bishop Simon Rochfort—Synod of Newtown—Constitutions of Synod—Death of Bishop Rochfort .. ..	63
---	----

## CHAPTER VII.

## EPISCOPAL APPOINTMENTS.

Four Parties to an Election—Bishop Rochfort's Candidature for Armagh—Deodatus—Walter de Brackley nominated by the King—Ralph le Petit elected by the Clergy— Election of Richard de la Corner—Contest between Geoffrey de Cusack and Hugh de Taghmon—Action of the Archbishop of Armagh—Thomas St. Leger—Appeal to the Pope—first Bishop by Papal Provision—the King's Prerogative .. .. .	78
---	----

## CHAPTER VIII.

## ANGLO-NORMAN MONASTERIES.

Abbey Churches—CISTERTIANS—Bective—Dispute about the Body of Hugh de Lacy—Kilbeggan—AUGUSTINIANS— Clonard—Ballyboggan—Colpe—Duleek—Navan— Mullingar—Kells—Durrow—Trim—the "Idoll of Trym" —a "Free Churchyard"—Newtown—Cathedral of Meath—Kilkenny West—Skryne—Nunneries of Clonard, Lismullen, and Odder—HOSPITALERS—Kilmainham Wood—Other Hospitals—BENEDICTINES—Ballymore— Fore—Beaubeac—CARMELITES—Athboy—Drogheda— Ardnacranna—Ancient Stained Glass—Kilcormack— DOMINICANS—Mullingar—Athlone—Trim—FRAN- CISCANS—Trim—Multifarnham—Slane .. ..	92
--	----

# CONTENTS

ix

Page

## CHAPTER IX.

### CHURCHES AND CLERGY.

Uses and Abuses of the old Abbeys—Opposition to the Religious Orders—Appropriation—Incomes of the Clergy—Value in present Money—Clonmacnoise—Duleek—Mullingar—Pluralities—Foreigners—Incumbents not in Holy Orders—Minors—Small size of Churches and Parishes .. .. .	113
---	-----

## CHAPTER X.

### INCIDENTS OF THE ANGLO-NORMAN PERIOD.

Excommunication and Interdict—Dispute at Kells—Mutual Excommunication—Archbishop Nicholas—Archbishop Roland—National Synod of Trim—Archiepiscopal Visitation of Meath—Arrogance of Bishops—Dispute about the Archdeaconry—Killallon—Protests against Papal Interference .. .. .	128
---	-----

## CHAPTER XI.

### SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS.

William de Paul—William St. Leger—Election by Synod—Action of the Pope—Nicholas Allen—Pestilence—Stephen de Valle—William Andrew—his Controversy with Henry Crumpe—Alexander Petit—Robert Mountain—Edward Dantsey—Appointed Deputy Governor of Ireland—Strange charge against him—William Hadsor—William Silk—Appointed by the Council of Basil—William Ouldhall—His Quarrel with the Earl of Desmond—John Payne—an Adherent of Simnel—his Friendship and Quarrel with the Earl of Kildare—William Rokeby—Hugh Inge—Richard Wilson—Clonmacnoise—Fighting Bishops—Plunder of Clonmacnoise—United to Meath—State of the Revenues .. .. .	142
--	-----

## CHAPTER XII.

### DISSOLUTION OF THE MONASTERIES.

Appointment of Bishop Staples—the Earl of Kildare and Silken Thomas—Devastation of Meath—the King's Supremacy—Parliament in Dublin—King Henry rebukes Staples—Dissolution of the Monasteries—Effect on the Diocese of Meath—Ruin of Abbey Churches—State of the Parish Churches—Mismanagement of the Government—Dissolution of the Monasteries not part of the Reformation .. .. .	161
--	-----



## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE REFORMATION.

Royal Supremacy—English-speaking Clergy—Contention between Staples and Archbishop Brown—a Suffragan to the Bishop of Meath—Destruction of Images—Complaints of Staples—Censured by the King—Primate opposes the English Service—his Controversy with Staples—Primate deprived—Accession of Queen Mary—Bishop Walsh .. .. .	173
--	-----

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE REIGN OF QUEEN ELIZABETH.

Deposition of Bishop Walsh—Act of Royal Supremacy—Bishop Brady—his Character—Proposal to found a University—State of the Diocese—Letter of Sir Henry Sydney—Restoration of Churches—Bishop Jones—his Sermon on Tolerance—Censured by the Queen—his Reply .. .. .	190
--	-----

## CHAPTER XV.

## BISHOP JONES'S "CERTIFICATE OF THE DIOCESE OF MEATH."

State of Ireland at the end of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth—the O'Reillys in Meath—Memoria for the better Reformation of the Kingdom of Ireland—Reply of the Deputy and Council—Certificate of the Diocese of Meath—Jones translated to Dublin .. .. .	209
--	-----

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE REIGN OF JAMES I.

Bishop Roger Dod—Bishop Montgomery—his Episcopate in Clogher—Absence in England—Robert Draper, Rector of Trim and Bishop of Kilmore—Proposal to found a University in Trim—Episcopate of Bishop Montgomery—Church Fabrics—Non-residence—Bishop Ussher—Militant Romanism—Letter of Rev. John Carter—List of Eminent Priests—Doctor Dease, Roman Catholic Bishop—Incident at Kilkenny West—Ussher's Sermon on the Sword—Offence taken at this Discourse—Translation of Ussher to Armagh .. .. .	221
---	-----



CHAPTER XVII.

VISITATION OF MEATH, 1622.

Revenues of the Bishopric—Alienations—State of the Churches—Glebe Houses—Non-residence—Pluralities—Reading and Preaching Ministers—Unordained Incumbents—Clergy List—Summary .. .. .	241
--	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE REIGN OF CHARLES I.

Doctor Anthony Martin—Laws against Romanism—State of the Church—Restoration of Tithes—Glebe Grants—Doctor Dease .. .. .	258
---	-----

CHAPTER XIX.

THE REBELLION OF 1641.

A Religious War—Massacre of Protestants—Depositions in T.C.D.—Reliability of the Evidence—Disturbances in Meath—Navan—John Sharp, Curate of Kells—the Vicar of Syddan—Galtrim—Influence of Dr. Dease—Case of the Vicar of Mullingar—Tragedy at Kilbeggan—Flight of the Bishop .. .. .	268
---	-----

CHAPTER XX.

THE REBELLION OF 1641 (continued).

Culpability of the Parliamentary Party—Position of the Roman Catholic Gentry—they join the Insurgents—Siege of Drogheda—Synod of Kells—Censure on Bishop Dease—the Cessation of Arms—Case of the Minister of Skryne—the Papal Nuncio—the King's Concessions—Battle of Dungon's Hill—Death of King Charles ..	278
--	-----

CHAPTER XXI.

CROMWELL.

Drogheda—Trim—Appointments to various Parishes—Zephaniah Smith—an unworthy Preacher—List of Cromwell's Preachers—Schoolmasters .. .. .	292
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE RESTORATION.

The King proclaimed—Church Order restored—Bishop Henry Leslie—Bishop Jones—his Career—a Militant Bishop—Anthony Dopping—Changes in the Diocese of Meath—Dopping's Sermon on Loyalty—Another Sermon on the same Text—Dissent at Summerhill—the Irish Bible ..	303
--	-----

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## THE REIGN OF JAMES I.

Duke of Ormond Dismissed—Attitude of the King towards Protestants—Position of Bishop Dopping—he imprisons a Roman Catholic Schoolmaster—Parishes left vacant—Career of King James in Ireland—Repeal of the Act of Settlement—Disarming of Protestants—Destruction of Churches—Strange Incident at Trim—Progress of Romanism—Appointments intended to be made by King James—Dopping's Account of the Sufferings of Protestants .. .. .	317
---	-----

# HISTORY

OF THE

## DIOCESE OF MEATH.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE Diocese of Meath represents approximately in its extent the ancient kingdom of the same name. Originally there were, as at present, only four provinces, but it is said that in the second century of the Christian era, King Tuathal formed the district of Meath into a separate territory by taking a portion from each of the four provinces of Ireland, and constituted these four portions a royal demesne for the Ard-righ, or chief king, of the land.<sup>1</sup> Within its confines was the palace of Tara, which was the headquarters of whatever central government existed in the country. In later years it became the most important part of what was known as "The Pale"—the district which was colonized and ruled by English adventurers, and in which the King of England held undisputed sway. As far, therefore, as the secular history of Ireland is concerned, Meath is that portion of the country most intimately associated with the events which have been deemed worthy

<sup>1</sup> Keating.

of record ; nor is its importance less when we come to consider the story of the Church in Ireland. It was here that the very earliest preachers of the Gospel laboured ; it was round this district that the most striking legends of St. Patrick centred ; it was here that some of the most important schools and Church establishments were founded ; and it was here that, in later years, the Norman abbeys flourished, many of them on sites that had before been consecrated by the founders of Celtic Christianity. To trace the history of the Diocese of Meath is, therefore, in a great measure, to tell the story of the rise and progress of the Irish Church.

There has been some little controversy as to whether Christianity existed in Ireland before the coming of Saint Patrick. The fact that Palladius was sent as bishop to the Irish who believed in Christ points in this way, and there are traditions of earlier missionaries, who had already laboured in the country before the coming of our great apostle ; but, as far as Meath is concerned, our earliest reminiscences are connected with Patrick. According to the following account, taken from the Book of Armagh, it would seem that Meath was one of the first places in which he founded a church.

When Patrick, with his holy companions in voyage, had arrived in Ireland, he left holy Lomman in the mouth of the Boind (Boyne) to guard the ship, forty days and forty nights ; and then he remained another period of forty, after having obeyed Patrick ; then, according to the command of his master, he arrived, under the guidance of the Lord, against the stream, as far as the ford of Trimm, at the door of the house of Feidilmidh, son of Loigaire.

And when it was morning, Foirterhenn, son of Feidilmidh, found him reciting the Gospel, and wondering at the Gospel and his doctrine, straightway believed ; and there being an open fountain in that place, he was baptised in Christ by



Lomman. And he stayed with him until his mother came to seek him, and she rejoiced at the sight of him, for she was a British woman. And she also believed in like manner, and told to her husband all things that had happened unto herself and unto her son. But Feidilmidh rejoiced at the coming of the cleric, for his mother was of the Britons, viz., daughter of the King of the Britons, viz., Scothnoe.

And Feidilmidh saluted Lomman in the British tongue, asking him in order concerning his faith and family. He answered him, "I am Lomman, a Briton, a Christian, the disciple of Bishop Patrick, who is sent by the Lord to baptize the tribes of the Irish, and to convert them to the faith of Christ, who hath sent me hither according to the will of God." And forthwith Feidilmidh believed, with all his family, and he devoted to him and to holy Patrick his territory, with his possessions, and with all his substances, and with all his race. All these he devoted to Patrick and Lomman, and to Foirtchernn his son, unto the day of judgment.

And Feidilmidh passed across the river of Boind, and remained at Clain Lagen, and Lomman remained with Foirtchernn at the ford of Trimm, until Patrick came to them, and built a church with them, the twenty-second year before the church of Armagh was founded.

Now the race of Lomman of the Britons was this: he was the son of Gollit, and the sister of Patrick was his mother; and the brothers of Lomman are these—Bishop Manis in Forgney in the district of the Cuircne; Broccaide in Imliuch of horses, in Ciarrighe of Connacht; Brocan in Brechmigh among the Ui Borthim;<sup>2</sup> Inngenog in Cill Dunnigluinn,<sup>3</sup> in the east of Bregia.

Now this is the proper race of Patrick by consanguinity and by grace, by faith and baptism and doctrine. And all that they had acquired of land, of territories, of churches, and of all special oblations, they offered to holy Patrick for ever.

But after some time, when Lomman's death was approaching, he went with his disciple Foirtchernn to his brother Broccaide; and they went to salute his brother, himself and his disciple Foirtchernn.

<sup>2</sup> This was the Broccan after whom the Church of Ardbraccan is named. The Ui Borthim were a tribe inhabiting that district of Meath.

<sup>3</sup> Cill Dunnigluinn is now called Kilgluin, and gives name to a townland in the parish of Balfeaghan in the Union of Moyglare. See O'Donovan's note, *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 834



And he committed his holy church to holy Patrick, and to Foirtchernn. But Foirtchernn refused to hold the heritage of his father, which he had offered to God and to Patrick ; until Lomman said, " Thou shalt not have my blessing unless thou accept the chieftainship of my church." He held the chieftainship, however, for three days only after the death of his master, until he arrived at the ford of Trimm, and then he straightway gave his church to Cathlaid the pilgrim.<sup>4</sup>

The *Book of Armagh* was written some centuries after the death of Saint Patrick, in an uncritical age, and by men who were manifestly anxious to uphold and extend the prerogatives of the See of Armagh. It was, however, compiled from more ancient documents. While, therefore, we may not be prepared to accept unhesitatingly all its statements, we must not, on the other hand, reject too lightly the testimony which it gives. The passage just quoted, at all events, tells us that there was an old tradition that the Church in Meath was founded before that in Armagh, and if the legend is to be credited, it must have been one of the first fruits of Saint Patrick's labours. The detail of a British woman welcoming her fellow-countryman, and thus making the way easy for his preaching—not to mention the possibility that she may not have been altogether ignorant of Christianity—lends a certain plausibility to the narrative ; and the unusual absence of anything miraculous in the story inclines us to give it the more ready credence. The Lomman here spoken of was sister's son to Patrick, and was one of those who accompanied him from Britain on his missionary expedition.

Another of the documents in the *Book of Armagh* gives us the story, so well known, of Saint Patrick preaching at Tara. The many embellishments with which the tale is furnished might lead us to regard

<sup>4</sup> Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 257.

it with suspicion, but in its main outlines it is probably a true recital. We are told that Patrick, sailing along the coast, arrived at the mouth of the River Boyne, where he left his boat, and made his way inland as far as Slane. He arrived there on Easter eve, and proceeded to light a "Paschal fire." But at the same time a heathen festival was being held at Tara, and part of the ceremonial was that all the lights in the country should be extinguished, to be relighted by a new fire which the Druids were wont to obtain by friction. It was believed that thereby good crops and general prosperity would be secured. Great was the consternation, therefore, when on the distant hill the saint's fire was perceived, and it is said that the druids assured the king that "this fire which we see shall never be extinguished to all eternity unless we can put it out to-night." The monarch thereupon ordered his chariot, drove over to Slane, and summoned Patrick to appear before him. He was manifestly the victim of a considerable amount of superstitious fear, regarding the saint as a superior kind of magician, and he felt by no means reassured when Patrick came boldly forward with his companions, chaunting the words of the Psalm, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God." He therefore professed friendliness, and invited Patrick to appear before him at Tara, and explain his doctrine, while at the same time he arranged that an ambush should be laid on the way, by which treachery he hoped to rid himself of the obnoxious missionary. But when the watchers returned to find that Patrick and his followers had arrived before them, and when they reported that there had passed them, as they watched, a small herd of deer, equal in number to that of the party of Christians, even the king's druids began to

take fright, and to think that they had to do with men who could change their forms at will, and who no doubt had many other supernatural powers.<sup>5</sup>

According to the legend they were not long before they saw those miraculous powers displayed. One of these druids presented Patrick with a cup of poisoned drink, and the Saint perceiving this, "blessed the cup, and the liquor became like ice, and the vessel being turned, that alone fell out which the magician had put into it, and he again blessed the cup, and the liquor was restored to its natural state." Then the druid brought snow on the earth, but Patrick challenged him to remove it again, and he confessed his inability to do so. "You have power to do evil, but not good," was the rejoinder; "it is not so with me"—and the saint immediately caused the snow to melt. After that the druid brought darkness, but was unable to dispel it; and Patrick once more showed his power, at once superior and beneficent. Finally they agreed to a trial by fire, and in a story which recalls that of the Book of Daniel, we are told how the druid was consumed, whereas the Christian came out unhurt. According to the *Book of Armagh*, all this resulted in the conversion of the king, who said to his elders: "It is better that I should believe than die"; but there is reason to believe that no such happy result ensued. On the contrary, it is almost certain that King Leary died, as he lived, a heathen and an unbeliever.

It is in connection with this incident that Saint Patrick is said to have used the shamrock as an emblem or representation of the doctrine of the Trinity. The legend, however, is of comparatively late origin, and does not appear in any of the earlier records. Of much greater antiquity is the tradition that the hymn known

<sup>5</sup> Life of St. Patrick in the *Book of Armagh*.



as the Lorica or Breastplate of Saint Patrick was composed on this occasion. It is sometimes called "The Deer's Cry,"<sup>6</sup> in allusion to the story given above, and its archaic character and uncouth forms bespeak for it an antiquity which agrees well with that claimed by tradition. A rendering of it into English verse by the late Mrs. Alexander forms one of the features of the *Irish Church Hymnal*.

The results of Patrick's preaching at Tara were not very striking, and indeed his chief success seems to have been that he was granted free permission to expound his doctrines. One convert, however, is mentioned, the young man Erc, who alone of the king's retinue rose up to greet Patrick, when the latter came into the monarch's presence. Erc is associated with the Church of Slane, over which he presided for many years.

It was shortly after this that the Church of Donaghpatrick was founded. Donaghpatrick was in the immediate neighbourhood of the royal city of Teltown, where every year a great assembly of the people was held. Patrick took advantage of the concourse for his work of evangelisation. But with varying success. One chief attacked him, and attempted to throw him and his followers into the river, for which reason, it is said, the stream, named up to that time the White Water, became ever afterwards known as the Black Water. Other chiefs were less obstinate; and one in particular—a prince named Conall—accepted the faith, and bestowed on Saint Patrick the site on which the church of Donaghpatrick was afterwards built.<sup>7</sup> The new church, lately erected by the generosity of Mr. Thomas Gerrard of Gibbstown, stands on the ancient site, and

<sup>6</sup> Bernard and Atkinson, *Irish Liber Hymnorum*, Vol. ii., p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*.

preserves the dimensions which have been handed down by tradition from the earliest ages.

We must remember that in each case the founding of a church meant the founding of a Christian community. Ireland was then, and continued to be for centuries afterwards, in the tribal state. Each chieftain was independent of his neighbours ; and although in theory a central authority was supposed to exist, yet the rule of the *ard-righ*, or chief king, was more in name than in reality, for he was obeyed only in so far as he could enforce his authority by force of arms ; and the organization of the Church adapted itself to the political condition of the country. A diocese, in the modern sense of the term, did not exist. Bishops there were, but their jurisdiction was tribal rather than territorial. This very fact has left its impress on the diocese to the present day ; for the rural deaneries of Meath are practically the same as the territories occupied by the different tribes in the olden time, and for many centuries each of these deaneries had its own separate bishop.

Round each church, then, was gathered what might be called an ecclesiastical clan, formed to a great extent on the model of the secular clans by which they were surrounded. It will be noticed in the extract given above respecting the founding of the Church of Trim, that Foirtchernn was asked by the dying Lomman to assume the "chieftainship." The expression exactly denotes the position which it was proposed that he should occupy. He was to be the head of the ecclesiastical clan. It explains also why Foirtchernn was so reluctant to assume it. It appeared to him to be like taking back that which had been dedicated to God. He would be resuming that heritage which his father had given to the church. If, as many people imagine, the



story be an invention of an age somewhat later than that of Saint Patrick, the incident was no doubt put in with a didactic purpose, to discountenance the plunder of Church property ; and, in any case, the example shown by Foirtchernn would have been often cited, for all were not so conscientious as the zealous neophyte. Indeed, there were few churches in which the chieftainship was not confined to the members of the ruling classes.

The head of an ecclesiastical clan, such as has been described, would be called the coarb, or successor, of the founder. He would have all the authority that a lay chieftain possessed, and if there were one or more bishops in the " family," as there might very well be, they, no less than the others, were subject to his rule.

The churches of Trim, Slane, Donaghpatrick, Tara, Ardagh (Union of Enniskeen), Castletown-Kilpatrick (Union of Drakestown), and Kilpatrick (Union of Collinstown), are all dedicated to Saint Patrick. This fact embodies the tradition that all these places were the scene of the saint's labours, and that the original separation of the site, and erection of a church, was due to his exertions.

## CHAPTER II.

### COMPANIONS OF ST. PATRICK.

WE have seen that Christianity in Meath was largely due to the preaching of Saint Patrick, and that several of our churches were probably founded by him. He was, however, only the head of a band of workers, who accompanied him on his mission, and whose numbers were soon increased by the converts that they made. Of these also, many are associated with the Diocese of Meath, and the sites of the churches which they founded are still dedicated to God, while edifices devoted to His worship bear their names to the present day. It must always be remembered that the custom of choosing "patron" saints, and of naming the churches after them was unknown in ancient Ireland. Each church bore the name not of its patron but of its founder. This fact gives a peculiar interest to the study of Irish names of places, for where the name of a saint is incorporated in the name of a place, the fact embodies an old tradition—and a tradition less liable to variation than any other—that there the saint laboured, and gathered round him a body of converts who were united by him into a Christian community.

First of these early teachers to be mentioned is Saint Sechnall, whose name is incorporated in that of the Parish Dunshaughlin. An ancient poem, quoted by the Four Masters, gives him the first place in Patrick's "family," and styles him his "bishop without fault."<sup>1</sup> According to one account, he was the son of Darerca, and according to another, of Limain,

<sup>1</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 448.

both of whom were sisters of Saint Patrick. Few details of his life have been preserved, but according to some authorities he was for a time at the head of the church of Armagh. There is a remarkable poem attributed to him, which is regarded as of great value in connection with the life of Saint Patrick. The occasion of writing it is said to have been some disparaging remarks which Sechnall made about his illustrious kinsman. He said that Patrick would be a good man, "were it not for one thing, the small extent to which he preaches charity." This came to Patrick's ears, and gave great offence; and the poem was written by way of amends for the slight that had been offered. It is written in Latin, and, like many of the old Irish compositions, has each stanza beginning with a letter of the alphabet in order. Professor Bernard considers that it may possibly be authentic, and says that "it may take rank with the *Confession* and the *Letter to the Subjects of Coroticus* as a document of the first importance for the life of Saint Patrick."<sup>2</sup> It describes the virtues of the saint in somewhat extravagant language, but "the miracles that are so abundantly ascribed to Patrick in the later documents are conspicuously absent from this; and it is throughout marked by that simplicity and sobriety of tone which characterize the work of a contemporary." The first verse may here be given:

Audite, omnes amantes Deum, sancta merita  
 Viri in Christo Beati Patricii Aepiscopi:  
 Quomodo bonum ob actum simulatur angelis,  
 Perfectamque propter vitam aequatur apostolis.<sup>3</sup>

The hymn goes on to recount the virtues of Patrick, his pure life, his success as a missionary and his power

<sup>2</sup> *Irish Liber Hymnorum*, vol. ii., p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 7. Hadden and Stubbs' *Councils*, vol. ii., p. 324.



of expounding the Scriptures. He likens him to the Apostles Peter and Paul, but unfortunately gives no details of the incidents of his life, and therefore, although undoubtedly old, the hymn is not of any great value as a historical document. The legend is that, as a reward for the composition, Patrick promised that Heaven would be the reward of everyone who would recite the poem at lying down and rising up—the author had suppressed the first verse, so the saint was not aware when granting this indulgence that it referred to himself. Sechnall, however, was not satisfied, and objected that it was too long, and that not everyone would be able to remember it ; and thereupon Patrick made the concession that all its grace should be in its last three verses. This brings before us an extraordinary peculiarity of some of the old Irish forms of worship. In many of their hymns they only recited the last three verses, and they believed that the whole virtue of the composition resided in these.<sup>4</sup>

Another of Saint Patrick's contemporaries was Saint Cairnech, the founder of Dulane Church, the ruins of which stand in the Union of Kells. He was, as his name implies, a native of Cornwall, but came as a missionary to Ireland. In his own country he is known as Carantoc, and an interesting and very ancient church, recently restored, still bears his name. He is said to have joined with Patrick in revising the old laws of the country and bringing them into conformity with Christian ideas. An old quatrain tells us,

Laeghaire, Corc, Daire the stern ;  
Patrick, Benen, Carineach the just ;  
Ross, Dubhthach, Fearghus with goodness ;  
The nine props those of the Seanchus Mor.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This point is treated with much learning and ingenuity by Canon Lawler in his work on *The Book of Mulling*.

<sup>5</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 438.



The "Seanchus Mor" was the great book of Statutes, codified at a very early period. The old church of Dulane is an interesting specimen of ancient ecclesiastical architecture, and is now preserved as a national monument. Its "cyclopiian" doorway, with its massive lintel, is specially worthy of notice, and excites the admiration of all antiquaries. The name of Cairnech is also associated with a curious relic known as the Misach, which was a book of some sort, said to have been produced by his own hand. The book has long since disappeared, but the shrine in which it was encased is still preserved in the College of Saint Columba, at Whitechurch. Like some other relics of the same class, it was used for a long time by the O'Neill Clan as one of their insignia of battle, and when brought into the field of conflict was believed to bring victory to them, provided that their quarrel was just.<sup>6</sup>

Saint Kenan, the founder of Duleek, was one of Patrick's first converts. According to an old Irish annotator on the *Hymn of Saint Fiacc*, Kenan had found Patrick at the time when he was escaping from captivity, and had sold him to the shippers who were at the mouth of the Boyne, receiving in return two copper cauldrons.<sup>7</sup> The legend tells how when he brought the cauldrons home he hung them on the walls of his house, but found that his hand clave to them so firmly that he was unable to get free. Then his wife came to help him, only to find herself in a similar plight. Eventually the whole household became attached to the cauldrons, and there was nothing for it but to send for Patrick and beg for their release. Needless to say, this led to his repentance, and he became a Christian.

<sup>6</sup> O'Curry, MSS. *Materials*, pp. 336, 599.

<sup>7</sup> *Irish Liber Hymnorum*, vol. ii., p. 178. *Book of Lismore, Life of St. Patrick*, 194-202.

His church at Duleek is reputed to have been the first stone building erected in Ireland, "for before that time the churches of Ireland were built of wattles and boards."<sup>8</sup> In the *Book of Armagh* it is said that the church of Duleek was the eighth which Patrick erected in the plains of Meath.<sup>9</sup> It is also stated in the *Annals of Tighernach* that Patrick presented Kenan with a copy of the Gospels, evidently a valuable possession in those days.

Another of Saint Patrick's early converts was Saint Erc of Slane. We have already seen how he, alone amongst the retinue of the king, did honour to Patrick by rising up at his approach. It will also be noted that he is mentioned with Patrick and Cairnech as one of the nine pillars of the *Senchus Mor*, or great book of laws. He was in his day a famous Brehon, and in the account of the "family" of Saint Patrick, given by the Four Masters, he is spoken of as "his sweet spoken judge." In recording his death, also, they tell us that, in the age of Christ 512, "Saint Erc, Bishop of Lilcach (a place not identified) and of Fearta-fear-Feig (Slane), by the side of Sidhe-Truim to the west, died on the second day of the month of November. His age was fourscore and ten years when he departed. This Bishop Erc was judge to Patrick. It was for him that Patrick composed this quatrain :

Bishop Erc,—

Everything he adjudged was just

Every one that passes a just judgment

Shall receive the blessing of Bishop Erc."<sup>10</sup>

A small church, beautifully situated on the banks of the Boyne, near Slane, still retains the name of Bishop Erc's Hermitage.

<sup>8</sup> Office of St. Kenan, quoted in Harris's *Ware*.

<sup>9</sup> *Book of Armagh*, Tirechan's *Collections*.

<sup>10</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 512.

Several other contemporaries of Saint Patrick are associated with Meath, among whom may be noted Trena, the founder of Kildalkey ; Breccan, the founder of Ardraccan ; and Bishop Munis, a kinsman of Patrick's, who founded the church of Forgney. Lomman, too, who has already appeared in connection with Trim and the founding of the church there, is also associated with the parish of Portloman in Westmeath.

All these names represent to us the missionary work of the first teachers of the Gospel. In most cases little more remains to us than the record of their existence, and the story of the Church of Ireland is so much a thing apart from that of the rest of Christendom that they are not commemorated by the ordinary historian. But in their day they did good and faithful work in planting the standard of the cross amidst a barbarous people. It was a thing to be expected that Meath, politically important as it was in those early days, would receive special attention at the hands of the missionaries. The existence of so many places where the names of early teachers are commemorated shows that this was indeed the case. The impossible stories with which their lives are embellished have led many to regard them as mythical creatures. These wild fancies, however, should be regarded as the reflection of a later age which delighted in the miraculous, and often took very ordinary events and retold them in such a way that the story lost all resemblance to its original form. The critical instinct of modern times naturally rejects these flights of the imagination, but we should remember that in some of the most impossible stories there is a foundation of fact, and that the old writers never thought of inventing characters as the modern novelist does. They laid hold on historical personages for their characters. The names, therefore, are not mythical,



though many of the incidents may be apocryphal ; and while we can never use such sources of information for details, they are not without value in presenting to us the broad lines of the picture. They are not unlike the ivy which clings around many an ancient building. It is no part of the original structure, and possibly it has destroyed some of its features and obscured others. But if it has destroyed, it has also preserved, and it never would have been there at all if the structure it enfolds had not first existed. So these impossible, but, it must be confessed, picturesque legends have always had some real historic incident around which they have clung ; and if to some extent they have obliterated its outlines, in other ways they have preserved memories that would otherwise have been consigned long ago to oblivion.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE SCHOOLS OF CLONARD AND CLONMACNOISE.

THE age of the missionaries in Ireland was soon followed by the age of schools, and these after a time became so famous that scholars flocked to them not only from all parts of Ireland itself, but also from England,<sup>1</sup> and from several parts of the Continent. In pagan days the work of education was in the hands of the druids. The Christian teachers succeeded them in this office, and devoted to it an amount of enthusiasm and energy that gained fame for them throughout all the west of Europe, and obtained for Ireland the title of "the Island of Saints and Doctors." The disturbed state of the Continent helped this to some extent. The attacks of the barbarians on the different provinces of the old Roman Empire destroyed for a time all that quietude that was necessary for the pursuit of learning, and in Britain the incursions of the Saxons made havoc of the Church, and reduced a once Christian land to a state of heathenism. It was only in Ireland—removed by its geographical position from these commotions—that comparative peace was to be found. Not but that there were tribal wars in abundance. This was inevitable in consequence of the absence of any strong central government. But these wars, which in importance scarcely deserved more than the name of faction fights, and were never of long continuance or wide extent, scarcely affected the Church, for in all

<sup>1</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book iii., Chap. 7.

such conflicts the seats of religion and learning were respected. It was only from the time of the Danish invasions that, first the Norsemen, and afterwards the Irish themselves, began to burn and pillage the sanctuaries throughout the land.

These schools differed only slightly from the ordinary secular clans by which they were surrounded. The inmates, consisting often of both sexes, gave the same allegiance to the head of the establishment that ordinary men gave to the chief of their tribe. They tended the cattle, tilled the fields, ground the corn, and performed all the other duties that rendered their community self-contained and independent. No fees were paid nor expenses of any kind incurred. Luxuries there were none, nor was the want felt by those who had never known luxury. Each man built his own house, which was nothing more than a rude hut constructed of wattles and clay, easily erected, and just as easily destroyed. Most of their time was spent in the open air. The conditions of existence were hard, but not harder than those to which they had been accustomed all their lives.

Almost the first, and for many ages the most famous of these schools, was that founded by Saint Finian at Clonard, somewhere about the year 520. This Finian was the child of Christian parents, and was born in Leinster. He was early placed under the care of Foritchernn of Trim, who was, as we have seen, one of Saint Patrick's first converts. He afterwards passed over into Britain, and entered the famous school of Saint David, at Menevia in Wales—a fact interesting to the historian, showing, as it does, that there was a certain amount of intercourse between Ireland and the sister island. It was doubtless from his experience there that he conceived the idea of establishing a

similar institution in Ireland. After various wanderings, he settled at length at Clonard, and soon attracted a great number of followers, so much so that it is said that at one time no less than three thousand students were there under his instruction. People flocked to him from all parts, and even those who were much senior to him in years were glad to have the opportunity of sitting at his feet.

There is a curious old document, first published by Archbishop Ussher, which gives what is called a catalogue of the saints of Ireland. It divides them into three classes. The first, it tells us, belonged to the age of Patrick, and were the founders of churches. The second were later in date and more ascetic in their practices. They refused the services of women, and separated them from their monasteries, in this respect departing from the example of those who had gone before. The third order was mostly hermits who lived in desert places, shunned private property, and lived on herbs and water, and on the alms of the faithful. "The first order was most holy, the second order very holy, and the third order holy. The first shines like the sun, the second like the moon, and the third like the stars."<sup>2</sup> Finian is reckoned first among the second order, and is said by some to have been the instructor and tutor of all the others. Among those who came under his influence were twelve men of great eminence, who are spoken of afterwards as "the twelve apostles of Erin," and from this circumstance he is spoken of by the Four Masters as "the tutor of the saints of Ireland."<sup>3</sup> There were few of the leading churchmen of the sixth century in Ireland who had not come under his influence.

<sup>2</sup> Elrington's *Ussher*, vol. vi., p. 477.

<sup>3</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D., 548.



The character of Finian is thus summed up in the *Book of Lismore*. The writer tells us that the saint was "one who made pure offerings to God, like Abel, son of Adam ; fervently prayerful, like Enoch, son of Jared ; a pilot fully inclined to find or to steer the Church among the waves of the world, like Noah, son of Lamech ; a true pilgrim, like Abraham ; dutiful, gentle, like Moses, son of Amran ; enduring, like Job ; a wise man full of knowledge, like Solomon, son of David ; a universal teacher and a chosen vessel, like Paul the apostle." <sup>4</sup>

In the year 548 a visitation of the pestilence known as the yellow plague raged through Ireland. It was the first time that it appeared in the country, and it carried off a great number of victims, including some of the most eminent men in the Church. Among them was Finian, and, as after his death the plague abated, the belief grew up that by the sacrifice of himself he had purchased exemption for the rest of the people. "As Paul died in Rome for the sake of the Christian people, lest they should all suffer in the pains and punishments of hell, even so Finian died in Clonard for the sake of the people of the Gael, that they might not all perish of the Yellow Plague." <sup>5</sup>

The establishment at Clonard continued to exist down to the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion. It produced a long succession of men who were eminent in their day, but whose names now sound unfamiliar—such is the evanescent character of all human greatness. The annalists for the most part record for us simply their parentage and their decease. Sometimes, however, they give us small details that make us wish that they had not been so concise in all their statements, but had given us some particulars of the lives of

<sup>4</sup> *Book of Lismore*, Life of Findian, 2740.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



these remarkable men. Thus they tell us of Bishop Tola, who was "a worthy soldier of Christ," and of Faelgus, who was "a wise man of Clonard." They tell of Suairleach, "bishop, anchorite, and abbot of Clonard, doctor in divinity and in spiritual wisdom, in piety and good deeds, so that his name spread over all Ireland:" and yet again of Ruman the amiable, a bishop who was "a shrine of wisdom, illustrious, acute, a man of virgin purity," and "loved by the hosts of the assembled people." Then we have Colman, the "wise doctor," and Maelmochta, "the head of the piety and wisdom of Ireland;" Tuathal, the bishop, who "died after a good life," and Oengus, lord of Laeghaire, who, after a life of turmoil, retired to spend at Clonard his declining days, but was followed thither by his foes, and slain by the lord of Delvin. Such entries suggest many thoughts, but it is left to the imagination to fill in the picture. They tell, however, that the place was the abode of learning and piety, where good and learned men served their generation by the will of God.

The community at Clonard had also their times of trouble. From the middle of the eighth century down to the end of the twelfth it was often desolated by hostile troops, sometimes belonging to the native Irish, and sometimes to the foreigners, who were beginning to form settlements in the country. It was burned in 746, again in 784, and yet again in 794. In 840 it was pillaged by the Danes, who came again with their unwelcome attentions in 887. In 1045 it was burned three times in the one week, so that the whole town with its churches was destroyed. In 1136 "the inhabitants of the Brenny plundered and sacked Clonard, and behaved in so shameless a manner as to strip O'Daly, then chief poet of Ireland, even to his skin, and leave him in that situation; and, amongst other outrages, they

sacrilegiously took from the vestry of this abbey a sword, which had belonged to Saint Finian, the founder." And so the story went on year after year, until Clonard was plundered and burnt for the last time in 1170 by the men of Leinster, acting in conjunction with the newly-arrived Normans ; and in 1175 its place was taken by an Augustinian monastery founded then by Walter de Lacy. There are no remains at Clonard at present which testify to its former greatness. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the ruins were extensive, though in a great state of dilapidation. The only relic that recalled Celtic days was the stump of the round tower. The tower itself fell, according to the annalists, in 1039. The other remains, which were those of the Norman abbey, are thus described by Archdall :

The entrance into this abbey, on the west side, was through a small building, with a lodge over it, which led into a small court ; to the right of this court stands the kitchen and cellar, and over them the dormitory, ranging with the river, and overlooking the garden, which sloped from thence to the water's edge ; opposite the entrance was another small apartment, and adjoining to it the refectory, which was carried for some length beyond the square, and joined the choir, a large and elegant building, most part of which still remains, and the windows are finished in a light Gothic style. On the south side of the altar is a small double arch, in the old Saxon manner, and divided by a pillar through which iron bars were fixed. This is supposed to have been the founder's tomb. There are many remains of walls adjoining the other parts of the abbey, but in so ruinous a state that little information can be gleaned from them. At a little distance from the east window, in the burial ground, stands a small chapel, in which is a table monument, ornamented with the effigies of a man and woman, in a praying posture, and dressed in the ruff of Queen Elizabeth's time ; the sides adorned with many coats of arms—that of the family of Dillon is most conspicuous." <sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> This quotation from Archdall is given by Wilde in his *Boyne and Blackwater*, and is reproduced from him.

All these have completely disappeared, and there are at present only an old Norman font, beautifully carved, and a large stone trough formerly used for washing the pilgrims' feet. Otherwise all vestiges of the ancient and mediæval establishments have been completely obliterated.

Among the alumni of Clonard were many whose names afterwards became eminent, but none more so than Kieran, the founder of Clonmacnoise. His father was an artificer, for which reason he is often spoken of as the son of the carpenter. He cannot have been long at Clonard, for he died young, and in his short life spent a considerable time on the Island of Aran, at Scatterry, and at Hare Island, before he finally settled at Clonmacnoise. The details of those early years are given at considerable length in his biographies, but do not concern us here. Suffice it to say that he arrived on the banks of the Shannon in the year 544, "on the eighth of the calends of February, on the tenth of the moon, on the tenth of the lunar month, on a Saturday,"<sup>7</sup> and that the work of building was completed on the ninth of May in the same year.

It will be noted that the date is given with great preciseness, and possibly some readers may smile with incredulity at the thought that such minute accuracy should be claimed in the old documents which contain our information. But it is a well ascertained fact, though one not generally known, that wherever our old records can be tested by the astronomical events that they record, they invariably satisfy the test. In this particular instance, I have myself made the necessary calculations, and they altogether bear out the reliability of the narrative. The twenty-third of January in the year 544 was a Saturday, and the moon

<sup>7</sup> *Book of Lismore*, Life of Kieran, 4374.



was then eleven days old, so that if the day be taken from the previous sunset, it exactly agrees with the account. This last point is most important, for if a calculation had been made at the time when our oldest documents were written, and thus the information had been manufactured, the old cycle then in use would not have brought out the result correctly. We are therefore inevitably led to the conclusion that information such as this must have been given by an eyewitness, and that the date thus minutely specified is to be taken as the undoubted time when Clonmacnoise was founded.

It is also recorded that Kieran died the same year, on the ninth of September, which was also a Saturday, and the fifteenth day of the moon. Here, adopting the same tests, we find the old documents at fault. But the year following fulfils all the conditions. In it the ninth of September was a Saturday, and the fifteenth day of the moon, counting from the previous sunset as before. The copyist complains that the old manuscript from which he wrote was very much injured, and hard to make out in some places. It is, therefore, easy to understand how he may have made a mistake, and have written "the space of seven months" as the period of Kieran's residence at Clonmacnoise, when he ought to have written "the space of a year and seven months."

An extraordinary reason is given by the hagiologists to account for the shortness of Kieran's life. It is said that the saints of Ireland were jealous of him, and prayed that he might soon die. "The saints of Ireland envied Kieran for his goodness, and they betook themselves to the King of Heaven, that his life might be shortened. So great was the envy that they had for him, that even his own comrade Columbcille



said, 'Blessing on God,' said he, 'who took this holy Kieran ! for if he had remained until he was an ancient man, he would not have found the place of two chariot horses in Ireland that would not have been his.' " <sup>8</sup>

Notwithstanding the exaggerations with which the old chroniclers have deformed their story, the picture of this young saint, cut off in the flower of his age, is at once touching and beautiful. On his deathbed he foretold that times of persecution would come, when his followers would be attacked " by evil men, towards the end of the world ; " and when they asked whether in that case they should abide by his bones or go to another place, he replied, " Go, and leave my relics, as the bones of the deer are left in the sun ; because it is better for you to dwell along with me in heaven than to remain here by my relics." He then asked to be brought into the open air. " ' Let me be carried to the little height,' saith he. And when he looked at the sky and the lofty air above his head, he said, ' Awful is this way above.' ' Not for thee is it awful,' say the monks. ' I know not, indeed,' saith he, ' aught of God's commandment which I have transgressed, yet even David son of Jesse, and Paul the Apostle, dreaded this way.' Then angels filled all between heaven and earth, in order to meet his soul. Afterwards he was carried into the little church, and he raised his hands, and blessed his people." <sup>9</sup>

Clonmacnoise, notwithstanding the early demise of its founder, soon surpassed all the religious establishments in Ireland in importance. This may possibly have been primarily due to the fact that the king, Diarmaid, took the place under his protection from the first. On the day when Kieran drove the first stake

<sup>8</sup> *Book of Lismore*, Life of Kieran, 4472.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 4443.

into the ground, Diarmaid was there, and assisted in the task. As both grasped the stake together, the saint said to his guest : " Let, O warrior, thy hand be ever my hand, and thou shalt be in sovereignty over the men of Ireland." This emblematic incident forms the subject of one of the sculptures on the great Cross of Clonmacnoise, and may still be easily recognised. Diarmaid was at that moment a fugitive, and a reward was offered to whoever would bring his heart to the reigning monarch. He could scarcely believe the words of the saint when he told him : " Though your companions to-day are few, yet to-morrow you will be chief king of Erin." Yet so it came to pass, for one of his followers, hearing the prediction, determined to aid in its fulfilment. Taking the heart of a dog, he rode with haste to Girley, where the monarch was staying, and, as the supposed bearer of the heart of Diarmaid, was at once admitted into his presence, when, seizing his opportunity, he thrust the spear that bore the bleeding heart into the king's breast, and thus secured the unexpected succession of Diarmaid to the throne. Large offerings were made to Kieran in recognition of what seemed to have been brought about by his miraculous interposition, and thus, from the very first, Clonmacnoise was rich beyond all other churches in the land. Afterwards kings and chiefs used to send their sons to be educated there, and often spent their own declining years within its sacred precincts, or at all events they were borne thither to be laid at rest in its holy soil ; and thus it happened that for many centuries it was the most important of all Irish religious establishments. Its fame spread even beyond the seas, and many a pilgrim from far-off lands found shelter within its hospitable walls. It produced also some eminent scholars and writers, some of whose works

remain to the present day, and are invaluable to every student of Irish history.

There is a remarkable letter, published by Ussher, from the famous Alcuin to one Colchas, who seems to have been a lector at Clonmacnoise. In this Alcuin speaks of himself as "thy son," which, perhaps, might imply that he had been at one time under the tuition of Colchas. He also gives news about "all thy friends who are here"—that is, in France, at the Court of Charlemagne, which would lead us to conclude that there were Irishmen—perhaps students from Clonmacnoise—distinguishing themselves at that time on the Continent of Europe. He sends also a present of money, partly from the king and partly from himself, which again is an interesting point, and shows that at that time (A.D. 794) the fame of Clonmacnoise was very widely extended.<sup>10</sup>

The ruins of Clonmacnoise are generally known as the "seven churches," from a notion which sprung up among antiquaries in the beginning of the last century, that the Irish were in the habit of building their churches in sevens, as suggested by the seven churches of the Apocalypse. The idea is altogether a fallacy. The churches of Clonmacnoise, like those of similar places where there are said to be seven churches, were erected at different periods, by different founders, and with no intention of completing the number seven. As a matter of fact, even the numerical coincidence is wanting. The number of churches at Clonmacnoise, the ruins of which can be traced, is ten, and not seven. It is doubtful if there is a solitary spot in Ireland where the exact number seven is to be found, and if it be, the occurrence is merely accidental.

The ruins are now carefully preserved as a national

<sup>10</sup> Ussher, *Sylloge*, Ep. xviii.

monument, and are, some of them, as old as pre-Norman days, though none—not even the exceedingly small church in which the grave of Saint Kieran is pointed out—date from the time of the founder. Two well preserved round towers stand within the precincts, and one of them has been incorporated as a belfry for one of the churches. It was evidently standing there before the church was built, as the place can still be seen where a portion of it was hacked away in order to suit the requirements of the new structure. Some finely carved crosses stand in the graveyard, and a wonderful collection of ancient tombstones, by far the most numerous of any to be found in Ireland, has been brought together in one of the ruins. Altogether, it may be said that no locality in Ireland possesses such interesting remains of our ancient Church.



## CHAPTER IV.-

### DURROW AND KELLS.

THE schools of Ireland received, as we have seen, students from many lands. After a time a further advance was made, and they began to send out representatives who, leaving their own country, either laboured amongst the heathen, converting them to Christ, or else set up their establishments in Christian countries, and taught a stricter discipline than that which was generally accepted by those amongst whom their lot was cast. These were said to have embraced the life of pilgrimage, and so great was the missionary zeal which soon developed itself that the obligation was regarded as of universal application to everyone who aspired to the perfect Christian life. This foreign work is connected with the labours of two saints, who were not only contemporaries, but who rejoiced in the same name. Both were called Columba. Now we distinguish them by calling one Columbanus and the other Columkill. Both are commonly spoken of as missionaries. They were men, however, altogether different in character, and the results which they attempted and achieved were as different as the men themselves.

Columbanus was a leader in the monastic movement which at that time became so popular. His work lay, therefore, amongst people who were already Christian, and so great was his success that at one time it seemed that Celtic monasticism would be the type

which would eventually spread over Europe. Columkill, on the other hand, was a missionary pure and simple. He laboured among the heathen, and extended the bounds of the Church. Looking back from our own time on the work of these two men, we find that the labours of the one has left no result. The story of Celtic monasticism, as it existed in different parts of the continent of Europe, has an interest for the antiquary, but for scarcely anyone else. Whatever influence it may have had at one time grew less year by year, until at length the system disappeared altogether before one more in unison with the progress of thought. The work of Columkill was of a more permanent kind, and the Christianity of Scotland and of a great part of England is at the present moment its enduring monument. We can trace no connection between Columbanus and the Diocese of Meath. Columkill, on the other hand, worked amongst us. Some of his most important establishments were in the district, and there is every reason to believe that Meath men took part in his evangelistic efforts.

Columkill was born at Gartan, in the County Donegal, early in the sixth century, probably in the year 521. He was of noble descent, as was the case of most of the saints of Ireland, which simply means that social rank was considered to be as essential for the headship of an ecclesiastical clan, as it was for the chieftainship of an ordinary tribe. He was originally named Columba, but the suffix "kill," meaning "church," was afterwards added on account of his devotion. In his early youth he visited most of the principal schools, and was for some time a disciple of Saint Finian at Clonard. After a time he sought ordination, and for this purpose was sent to Bishop Etchen of Clonfad, in the County Westmeath.

This Clonfad is not the place known now as Clonfad-foran, but is in the parish of Killucan. Indeed, the name Killucan is a corruption of Kill-Etchen, and commemorates the residence of the saint in that neighbourhood. According to the legend, preserved in the Annotations on the *Martyrology* of Aengus the Culdee, Columba was at first scandalized by finding on his arrival that the bishop was engaged in ploughing, and he said to his companions : " I think it is not meet for us that a ploughman should confer orders on us." He tested him, however, and was convinced by the miracles which Etchen wrought that he was a man of more than ordinary worth. The account then goes on : " Columkille went up to the cleric, after having thus tested him, and told him what he came for. ' It shall be done,' said the cleric. The order of a priest was then conferred on Columkille, although it was the order of a bishop he wished to have conferred upon him. The cleric prayed until the following day. ' I regret,' said Columkille, ' that thou hast conferred this order upon me, but I shall never change it whilst I live ; for this reason, however, no person shall ever again come to have orders conferred upon him in this church.' And this has been fulfilled, up to this time." <sup>1</sup>

This strange story is probably the invention of a later age, and is intended to account for the fact that Columkill never became a bishop, and that his successors were, in like manner, not bishops but simple priests. This peculiarity of the Columban order attracted attention at an early date, as being contrary to the general custom, and is referred to by Bede, who, speaking of Iona, tells us : " That island has for its ruler an abbot, who is a priest, to whose direction all the province, and even the bishops, contrary to the

<sup>1</sup> Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 71.



usual method, are subject, according to the example of their first teacher, who was not a bishop, but a priest and monk.”<sup>2</sup> The legend evidently endeavours to save the credit of the saint by implying that it was his own vow that prevented him from ever seeking to be admitted to the higher order. But although this may lead us to suspect that it is not a contemporary account, it is none the less instructive, for, as Dr. Todd remarks, “the author must have aimed at giving some account of probability to his narrative, and we are therefore entitled to conclude that the circumstances introduced into it were such as he deemed consistent with the ecclesiastical usages of the times in which he himself lived.”<sup>3</sup> If this be so, it would seem to imply that in those early ages of Irish Church history bishops sometimes supported themselves by their own labour, cultivating their own land; that candidates for the episcopate came recommended only by their personal merits, without being chosen to the office by any synod, whether of bishops or others; that consecration was celebrated by a single bishop, and that it was possible for one to receive the episcopal order without having first obtained the order of priest. Most of these peculiarities we know, from other sources, to have actually existed, and they are to some extent the justification for those canons, passed in England and elsewhere, which disallowed the validity of Irish orders.

Two important establishments were founded by Columkill in Meath, namely, those at Durrow and Kells. For a long time Durrow was the most famous, and its erection is probably referred to by Bede, who tells us that “before Columba passed over into Britain,

<sup>2</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, iii., 4.

<sup>3</sup> Todd, *Life of St. Patrick*, p. 72.



he had built a noble monastery in Ireland, which, from the great number of oaks, is in the Irish tongue called Dearthmach (Durrow)—the Field of Oaks.”<sup>4</sup> The similarity of the two names Durrow and Derry, and the fact that both have reference to the abundance of oaks, make it doubtful, however, whether Bede has not confounded the two, and that hence he may be speaking of the latter instead of the former. Adamnan, the biographer of Columkill, has several references to Durrow, and speaks of the building of the great house there. There is also an ancient poem, ascribed to Columkill, in which he describes its charms, and “enlarges on the beauty of that devout city, with its books, and its learning, and its hundred crosses; he describes how sweet is the blackbird’s song, and the music of the wind as it murmurs through the elms on the oak plain;”<sup>5</sup> and it is in connection with Durrow that he says, in the same poem, that “death is better in reproachless Erin than life for ever in Alba (Scotland.)”

Durrow was founded somewhere about the year 553, and after Columkill had left the country for Iona, it was placed in charge of one Cormac. He was from Munster, and not being of the family of Columkill, was not acceptable to the inmates. He therefore remained but a short time, and his place was then taken by Laisren, who was first cousin of the saint. The establishment continued in more or less prosperity down to the time of the coming of the English. It was then seized on by Hugh de Lacy, who built a castle on the site, and it was there, as we shall see later, that he met his death.

Kells is less frequently mentioned in early records ;

<sup>4</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, iii., 4.

<sup>5</sup> Archbishop Healy, *Ireland’s Ancient Schools*, p. 303.

but as some of the most striking episodes of Columkill's life took place at Teltown, in the immediate neighbourhood, we may fairly assume that he was often there. The tradition is that the site was bestowed on the saint as a kind of recompense for a slight that had been offered to him by the followers of King Diarmaid. The date would be about the same as the founding of Durrow, or possibly a little later. Some time afterwards the king and the saint had a dispute, first about a copy of the Psalter, which Columkill claimed, and afterwards because the king violated the right of sanctuary—a right which was jealously guarded in those days. The result was that Columkill had to fly for his life, until he found refuge among the clans of the north, who were his own kindred. It was probably from Kells that he took his journey on this occasion, and a hymn is still extant, said to have been composed at the time, which was afterwards used as a "Lorica," or "Breastplate," to protect travellers on their journeys. Those who recited it were supposed to be secured against the dangers of the way. As being thus connected with Meath, and as a fair specimen of ancient Irish hymnology, a free metrical rendering may here be presented.

#### ST. COLUMKILL'S BREASTPLATE.

Columkill sang this while passing alone ; and it will be a protection to  
the person who will repeat it going on a journey.

When on the mountains bleak and bare  
I tread my lonely way,  
O Royal Sun, my path illumine,  
And turn my night to day.  
When foes surround and friends forsake,  
Be Thou, my Saviour, near ;—  
No guard like Thy protecting arm  
To save my soul from fear.

O vain is every human trust—  
 The fortress strong and high—  
 The warrior host—the hoarded wealth—  
 When the Great Doom is nigh.  
 Be God my hope, and let my life  
 From sin be ever free,  
 Then happy will I still rely  
 On His unchanged Decree.

Why labour every passing year  
 The barn to fill with store ?  
 Why heap the crumbling treasure up,  
 And ever strive for more ?  
 Be bounteous with the things of earth,  
 By God so freely given,  
 And freely give—so shalt thou find  
 A treasure in the Heaven.

Not luck nor chance doth rule my life,  
 But He who reigns on high,  
 Who still will give my daily bread,  
 And every want supply.  
 O King of Kings ! whate'er is mine  
 This day I leave with Thee ;  
 Protect and keep Thy servant now  
 And in eternity.<sup>6</sup>

The literal translation of the last lines is : “ My estates are with the King of Kings : my Order is at Kells and Moone.” The local allusion was omitted from the metrical rendering, in order to make the hymn more suitable for modern use, but it will be seen that the reference to Kells connects it at once with the Diocese of Meath, and renders it the more probable that it was composed there, and that the flight took place, as has been conjectured above, from thence.

The immediate result of this flight and of the conflicts that followed was that Columkill was forced

<sup>6</sup> For the original and a literal translation, see the *Miscellany of the Irish Archaeological Society*, vol. i., p. 1.



to leave the country, and this in turn led to his settlement in Iona, and the consequent evangelization of Scotland and, at a later date, of England. Thus the great missionary enterprise, the pride and glory of the ancient Irish Church, is directly connected with Meath, and may be said to have taken its rise in our midst.

In later years the connection between Kells and Iona was again renewed ; for when the Norsemen, in one of their first expeditions, devastated the islands on the west coast of Scotland, and, among other places, attacked Iona, the brethren gathered all their possessions together and, headed by their abbot, Cellach, fled to Kells, and founded there what they called a "new Iona." They carried with them the bones of their founder, and erected, possibly for the reception of these relics, the building which at present exists, and is known as Saint Columkill's House. This was in the year 804, according to the *Annals of Clonmacnoise*, or 806, according to the *Annals of Ulster*. Cellach did not remain long, but returned to Iona shortly afterwards, where he died in 815. Some of his followers, however, remained, and Kells rose to the highest importance among the Columban establishments. It continued to be one of the leading churches in Ireland up to the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion.

Both Kells and Durrow are famous for their remains of ancient Irish art. The *Book of Kells* is perhaps the greatest treasure in the library of our University, and the *Book of Durrow* nearly approaches it in value and beauty. The latter has an inscription in Latin on the back of the twelfth folio, which may be translated : "I pray thy blessedness, O holy presbyter, Patrick, that whosoever shall take this book into his hand may remember the writer, Columba, who have myself written this Gospel in the space of twelve days by the



grace of Our Lord.'<sup>7</sup> This has led some to think that the manuscript was actually written by the great saint himself, and the supposition seemed to gain some credibility from an old tradition which told that Columba gave a copy of the New Testament in his own handwriting to each of the churches which he founded in Ireland.<sup>8</sup> The fact, however, that the book consists of Saint Jerome's version of the Gospels, renders it doubtful, though, of course, not impossible, that the manuscript can be of such great age. There can be no doubt, however, that both it and the *Book of Kells* belong to very early times, and are monuments of the devotion and skill of the ancient Irish Church.

It is probably the *Book of Durrow* that is referred to by Giraldus Cambrensis, in his account of what he calls "a book miraculously written," though he connects the book with Kildare and not with Durrow. At all events no better description of that wonderful manuscript could be given. He says :

Among the miracles in Kildare, none appears to me more wonderful than that marvellous book which they say was written at the time of the Virgin Brigit at the dictation of an angel. It contains the Four Gospels according to Saint Jerome, and almost every page is illustrated by drawings, illuminated with a variety of brilliant colours. In one page you see the countenance of the Divine Majesty supernaturally pictured ; in another the mystic forms of the evangelists, with either six, four, or two wings ; here are depicted the eagle, there the calf ; here the face of a man, there of a lion ; with other figures in almost endless variety. If you observe them superficially, and in the usual careless manner, you would imagine them to be daubs rather than careful compositions, expecting to find nothing exquisite, where in truth there is nothing which is not exquisite. But if you apply yourself to a more close examination, and are able to penetrate the secrets of the art displayed

<sup>7</sup> Miss Stokes, *Early Christian Art in Ireland*, p. 18.

<sup>8</sup> Gilbert, *Account of Facsimiles of National Manuscripts of Ireland*, p. 11.

in these pictures, you will find them so delicate and exquisite, so finely drawn and the work of interlacing so elaborate, while the colours with which they are illuminated are so blended, and still so fresh, that you will be ready to assert that all this is the work of angelic and not human skill. The more often and closely I scrutinize them, the more I am surprised, and always find them new, discovering fresh cause for increased admiration.

Giraldus goes on to relate the legend which accounted for the writing of the book, and the story is interesting as showing that in his time the art of illuminating after the old Celtic method had been completely lost, though appreciation for the skill displayed remained. He tells us :

Early in the night, before the morning on which the scribe was to begin the book, an angel stood before him in a dream, and showing him a picture drawn on a tablet which he had in his hand, said to him "Do you think that you can draw this picture on the first page of the volume which you propose to copy?" The scribe, who doubted his skill in such exquisite art, in which he was uninstructed and had no practice, replied that he could not. Upon this the angel said "On the morrow entreat your Lady to offer prayers for you to the Lord, that He would vouchsafe to open your bodily eyes, and give you spiritual vision, which may enable you to see more clearly, and understand with more intelligence, and employ your hands in drawing with accuracy. The scribe having done as he was commanded, the night following the angel came to him again and presented to him the same picture, with a number of others. All these, aided by divine grace, the scribe made himself master of, and faithfully committing them to his memory, exactly copied in his book in their proper places. In this manner the book was composed, an angel furnishing the designs, Saint Brigit praying, and the scribe copying.<sup>9</sup>

Art of another kind is displayed in the High Crosses, on which are sculptured various Biblical

<sup>9</sup> *Topography of Ireland.*

scenes, as well as a wonderful variety of ornament. Here again Durrow and Kells vie with one another. The cross of Durrow is one of the finest still existing. Kells has portions of no less than five crosses, which are equally famous. Some of these crosses have beautiful interlaced ornament. Others have figures executed in bas relief. These latter have a special interest, for the subjects and the mode of treatment seem to point to Byzantine influence, and would lead us to believe that when, under the influence of the iconoclastic controversy, many artists were banished from the East, some of them must have found their way as far as Ireland. Anyone who compares the Byzantine ivories of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, with the sculptures on crosses such as those of Kells, must come at once to the conclusion that both owed their inspiration to the same source.<sup>10</sup> A curious peculiarity, well exemplified in the great cross of Kells, which points in the same direction, may here be noted. It is that when the Crucifixion is represented, the figure of Our Lord is clothed, and that the attitude is that of prayer and not of suffering. All this is in marked contrast to the modern crucifix. It may be noted, too, that no figure is ever depicted with a nimbus. Both of these points are manifest tokens of antiquity, and quite dispose of the contention recently urged by some English antiquaries that the Irish crosses are of later date than some which are to be found in the northern parts of the sister kingdom.

A word may here be said about the purpose for which these crosses were erected. There can be little doubt that their use was to mark a sanctuary. At a

<sup>10</sup> See an article by the author on The Baptism of our Lord, in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Irish Antiquaries*, 1893.



time when laws were without an effective sanction, the institution of something like the ancient cities of refuge was the only way in which a man could be protected from private vengeance. An old Irish canon enacts that the boundary of a sacred place should have the sign of the cross ; and another lays down the rule : " Wherever you find the sign of the Cross of Christ do not do any injury." The cross which at present stands in the market-place of Kells marks the spot which was formerly the entrance to the enclosure of the ecclesiastical city. The fugitive who had once passed that point was under the protection of the Church. A still more instructive example is furnished at Tristelkieran, in the parish of Loughan. There the churchyard stands by the side of the Blackwater, and has three crosses in position, marking the bounds of the sanctuary. There are the remains of a fourth cross in the bed of the river, so that one coming from the opposite bank might be in a place of safety while still endeavouring to ford the stream.

About the same age as the crosses, or perhaps a little later, are the round towers, of which an excellent example—perfect, except that the conical roof is missing—may be seen at Kells. These were manifestly watch towers, erected at a time when the Church was no longer at peace ; and in this connection the Kells tower is particularly instructive. Ordinarily there are four windows at the top of these towers, which command the four cardinal points, but in Kells there are five such apertures, corresponding to the five roads by which the place was formerly approached. The other round towers that Meath possesses are situated at Donaghmore, near Navan, and at Clonmacnoise.

Both Kells and Durrow are also celebrated for their metal work. The shrine in which was enclosed



the Psalter of Saint Columba was made in Kells in the eleventh century, and is still in existence, with an inscription indicating the place of its manufacture. For a long time it had been used as one of the insignia of battle by the tribe of the O'Neills, and was carried round the host on the breast of a "sinless cleric," before they went out to fight. When the book came to be used in this way, it ceased to be employed for reading, and, indeed, was hermetically sealed up in its casket. Then a superstition arose that great disasters would happen to the O'Donnell family (a branch of the O'Neills) if the shrine was opened. It is one of the curiosities of litigation that, in consequence of this superstition, proceedings in Chancery were commenced in 1814, by Mary O'Donnell, widow of Sir Neal O'Donnell of Newport, against Sir William Betham, Ulster King at Arms, for having, as she alleged, opened the casket without permission.<sup>11</sup>

There are also extant two croziers, one belonging to Durrow and the other to Kells. The former is the oldest, and the latter the most beautiful of these relics in existence. The crozier of Durrow is at present in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, and that of Kells in the British Museum. This last was found accidentally some years ago in London, when some alterations were being made in a house there. A cupboard had been built into one of the walls, and on this being removed, the crozier was found behind it. How it came there, or how long it had remained thus hidden, has never been found out; but that it formerly belonged to Kells was shown by an Irish inscription, which told that it had been made by one Maelfinnen of that town. It passed at first into the possession of Cardinal Wiseman, and at the death of

that prelate was acquired by the trustees of the British Museum.

All these works, in different departments of art, bear abundant testimony to the civilization and culture that must have existed in ancient Ireland, and show that in that civilization Meath took a most prominent place.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE CELTIC PERIOD.

THE history of the Church of Ireland naturally divides itself into three periods ; the first may be called the Celtic period, extending from the introduction of Christianity down to the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion. During all this time the Church was developed in a way peculiar to itself. It was independent of Western Christendom, and was beyond the jurisdiction of the Pope of Rome, though it was not without a party of increasing strength which aimed at bringing it into conformity to the rest of the Western Church. The second period is from the Invasion to the Reformation, during which time Romanism was firmly established. The third period is from the Reformation to the present day. The first period may be again divided into two parts ; the first extending to the time of the Danish invasions, at the beginning of the ninth century, and the other from that time to the days of Henry II.

We have already dealt with the founding of Christianity, and with the Schools and Missions that formed such a feature of early Irish Church history. We have now only to add that the building of churches proceeded apace, and that in a short time Meath was as well furnished with places dedicated to the worship of God as it is at the present day. In many cases the names of the founders of these sanctuaries have been handed down. To enumerate them, however, would

be tedious, and not altogether instructive. A brief notice of some of the most important must suffice.

Ardbraccan owes its foundation, it is said, to Saint Breccan, a kinsman of Saint Patrick, whose name is also associated with the church of Templebraccan, in the island of Aran, off the coast of Galway. He remained but a short time in Meath, and resigned his place to his much more famous successor, Saint Ultan. Ultan belonged to the third order of saints, who lived the life of hermits. He is credited with the authorship of a *Life of Saint Patrick*, and of two hymns in praise of Saint Brigid, both of which are preserved in the Irish *Liber Hymnorum*. He was succeeded by Tirechan, whose Annotations on the Life of St. Patrick are to be found in the *Book of Armagh*, and are a most important historical document. This work begins with the statement that "Tirechan the Bishop wrote these things either from word of mouth or from the book of Ultan the Bishop, of whom he was himself the scholar or disciple."

Saint Fechin of Fore is another of the third order, and his name appears first on the list. He chose for his retreat that picturesque valley in Westmeath, in which at the present day remains dating from the Celtic period stand side by side with the ruins of the Norman monastery of later date. It is said that he had three hundred disciples, of whom he became the "leader and father."

At the extreme end of the diocese is the parish of Drumcullen, now dismembered, and the portion on which the ruined church stands transferred to the diocese of Killaloe. The founder of this church was one Barrind, who was famous in his day as a traveller, and who, if legends are to be trusted, discovered America long before the time of Columbus.



In the same district is the ancient church of Rahan, small, like all the old buildings, but perhaps the most beautiful of all that have come down to us from pre-Norman times. It marks the site where, in the sixth century, Saint Carthage Mochuda set up his first establishment. For some reason or another he incurred the enmity of his neighbours, and was so persecuted by them that in the end he had to fly and seek for some other location where he and his followers might dwell in peace. After much wandering he settled in Lismore, the See of which he is said to have founded. There is a composition extant which professes to be the *Rule* drawn up by him for the direction of his disciples. It is a rather long poem, written in Irish, and deals with the duties appertaining to the various offices in the Church. In after years it is said that a king of the Britons named Constantine was abbot of the establishment at Rahan—a notable example of how the sanctuaries of Ireland attracted to them pilgrims from beyond the seas.

Mention may also be made of the church of Lynally, which was founded by Saint Colman at the end of the sixth or beginning of the seventh century. Colman was a Meath man by birth, and was one of the followers of Columkill, by whose influence a site was obtained from King Aidus, on which the church of Lynally was afterwards built. This Colman is referred to by Adamnan, who relates that once, while on his way to Iona, the saint was in great danger of shipwreck off the coast of Rathlin Island. Columkill, by prophetic instinct, became aware of the danger in which his friend was placed, but told his followers that “the Lord is thus frightening him, not that he is to be overwhelmed in the waves by the wreck of the ship in which he is sitting, but rather that he may be roused

to pray more earnestly that, God being propitious, he may pass over to us after the danger is over.”<sup>1</sup> Before settling at Lynally, he spent some time in Connor, and for many years afterwards there seems to have been some connection between the northern bishopric and the establishment in the King’s County, for several of the abbots whose deaths are recorded by the Four Masters are said to have been abbots of Connor and Lynally.

The church of Trevet (in the Union of Dunshaughlin) is one of the few which are not called after the name of the founder. It is said to have been so called because “three sods (tri-foid) were dug there in honour of the Trinity when the grave of Art was being dug there.” Art was king of Ireland at the end of the second century. The *Book of the Dun Cow* relates that this Art, though living in heathen times, was to some extent a believer in Christianity; and in “the Prophecy and Christian Belief of Art the Lonely,” it tells how he foretold the coming of Saint Patrick; the great changes which his mission would bring about in the condition of Erin; the subsequent importance, as a religious establishment, of Trevet, the place in which he then happened to be, and where, by his own direction, his body was carried from the battlefield and buried, in anticipation of the future sanctity of the place.<sup>2</sup>

Balrathboyne is said to have been founded by Saint Baithen, who succeeded Columkill in the abbacy of Iona, and is another of the links which bind Meath to the island sanctuary. It is he who is referred to in the affecting story which Adamnan tells of the last days of Columba. He relates that the latter, on the

<sup>1</sup> Adamnan. *Life of Columba*, i., 5.

<sup>2</sup> O’Curry, *MS. Materials*, p. 391.

evening before his death, "sat in his hut transcribing the Psalter; and coming to that verse of the thirty-third Psalm where it is written 'But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.' 'Here,' he says, 'I must stop at the foot of this page, and what follows let Baithen write.' The last verse which he had written is very applicable to the dying saint, to whom the good things of eternity shall never be lacking; and the verse which follows is indeed very suitable to the father who succeeded him, and was the teacher of his spiritual sons, namely, 'Come ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord.' And he, Baithen, as his predecessor recommended, succeeded him not only as teacher, but also as a writer."<sup>3</sup>

Another church connected with Iona was Skryne, which derives its name from the fact that in 875 the remains of Saint Columkill, in their shrine, were conveyed thither, on account of the attacks of the Danes on the northern island. This was not the first time that the bones of the saint had been brought to Meath, for, at the beginning of the same century, they had found a resting-place for a short time at Kells. From Kells they were conveyed back to Iona, and from Iona they were again brought to Skryne. Two hundred and fifty years later they were in danger again from the same foes, for we are told that in 1127 "the shrine of Columkill was carried off into captivity by the Danes of Dublin." The "captivity," however, was not of long duration, for the shrine was restored to its house at the end of a month.

It remains to notice that Meath furnishes us with several examples of that peculiar institution of the Irish Church, in which a community, consisting of both sexes, was presided over not by an abbot, but by an

<sup>3</sup> Adamnan, iii., 12.



abbess. Thus we have Clonguffin, in the parish of Rathcore, which was founded by Saint Fintina ; Kilskyre, founded by Saint Schiria, and Kilbixy, founded by Saint Bigseach. All these were, doubtless, formed on the model of the establishment founded by Saint Brigid at Kildare. Her influence, we are told, "like a fruitful vine, spreading all round with growing branches," extended itself through the whole country. Unfortunately we have few details about the manner of life in these strange communities. Bede has, however, described for us very fully the organization of the establishment at Whitby, which was presided over by the Abbess Hilda ; and, as we know that this was founded by Irish missionaries, we may not perhaps be far wrong in supposing that the less famous establishments in Ireland were something of the same kind. Under her sway there was strict discipline, and a community of goods, "so that, after the example of the primitive church, no person was there rich, and none poor, all being common to all, and none having any property." She insisted on strict attention to the reading of Holy Scripture, and obliged those who were under her direction "to exercise themselves so much in works of righteousness, that many might be found there fit for ecclesiastical duties, and to serve at the altar."<sup>4</sup> Such, though perhaps on a smaller scale, were these establishments in Ireland, of which now nothing remains to us but the name.

The materials that are available for the history of these centuries do not lend themselves easily to the compiling of a continuous narrative. The deaths of abbots and bishops and scribes are duly recorded, but the names we thus meet with are otherwise unknown, and are therefore of little interest to us. This

<sup>4</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, iv., 23.



much, at all events, we may infer, that church life continued, and that in every place a regular succession of ministers kept up the services of the Church. It is specially interesting to note the number of scribes that are mentioned, especially in the eighth century. This tells us that the production of books, and in particular of copies of the Scriptures, was carried on without intermission. The few manuscripts that remain show with what loving care the work was executed.

It was a new and unpleasant experience for these quiet workers and students when the Norsemen began to settle in the island. At first they only visited the coasts, and Meath, as an inland province, was comparatively secure. As we have seen in the last chapter, the brethren of Iona found amongst us a safe refuge, when their island home was devastated by the piratical invaders. In 875 they again turned to Meath in the hour of their distress, carrying with them once more the bones of their founder. This time they were deposited at Skryne, and the name, which signifies "shrine," is a remembrance of the event. After a time settlements were made by the foreigners in the maritime towns, and Danish kingdoms were established in Dublin, Waterford, and Limerick. Soon they began to make their way into the interior of the country, and there were few places that did not suffer more or less from their marauding expeditions. The proximity of Meath to Dublin laid it open to attack, and so we have the story again and again repeated of her churches having been devastated, and the treasures of her sanctuaries carried away. The Danes were all pagans, and had no respect for church property ; and it is sad to have to relate that the native Irish soon learned from them to plunder and destroy what their fathers,

with all their turbulence and violence, had regarded as sacred. The time was, therefore, one of great suffering and danger.

The first experience that Meath had of these marauders was in 833. A large body came in ships and landed on the coast of Wexford, and then made their way northwards, penetrating more or less into the interior of the country, and spoiling as they went. They proceeded as far as Duleek and Slane, both of which places they plundered. After that they returned to their ships and departed with their booty. A few years later, in 839, a more formidable expedition arrived under the leadership of the famous Turgesius, whose aim was not merely to plunder, but to form for himself and his followers a settlement in the island. His first enterprise was in the north, and he took possession of the ecclesiastical city of Armagh, forcing the abbot to flee, and appropriating to himself all the possessions of the church. After that he seems to have conceived the idea of subjugating the whole island, and with that purpose in view sent a fleet of ships round to the mouth of the Shannon, who, sailing up the river, reached as far as Clonmacnoise, which place they seized. It is said that his wife Ota took up her residence in one of the churches, and used to "give her audience," seated upon the altar.<sup>5</sup> After that he overran the whole of Meath, finding his richest booty in the ecclesiastical establishments. In 845, however, he was taken prisoner by an ingenious stratagem, and was put to death by the Irish by drowning in Lough Owel, in Westmeath. His death, however, brought only a temporary respite, for, only a few years later, "the foreigners plundered from the Shannon to the

<sup>5</sup> *Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, xi. Some writers have interpreted this to mean that she gave "oracular responses" from the altar. There are really no grounds for such a supposition.

sea,"<sup>6</sup> and among their exploits on that occasion was the burning of the oratory of Trevet, near Dunshaughlin, there being in the church at the time three score and two hundred persons, all of whom perished in the flames.

A short respite ensued, due, perhaps, to internal dissensions amongst the strangers, and at the same time an effort was made to promote some degree of unity amongst the native tribes. A great meeting of the chieftains of Ireland was assembled at Rahugh, in Westmeath, "to establish peace and concord between the men of Ireland."<sup>7</sup> The abbots of Armagh and Clonard attended the meeting, and if the good resolutions at which they arrived had only been carried into effect, something might, no doubt, have been done to stem the tide of invasion. But the truce between Irish factions has always been of an evanescent kind, and the divisions of the people have been the great strength of their enemies.

Soon after this, another Danish champion appears, named Barith, who joined with the Norsemen of Dublin, and devastated the whole country. He found a new source of booty in the ancient sepulchral caves which are so numerous all over the land, and which seemed to have contained treasures of gold, which had been buried with the dead.<sup>8</sup> Among his other exploits was an attack on the establishment at Duleek, whence "a great number of persons were carried off into captivity." He is spoken of as a "fierce champion and chief of the persecutors." He was afterwards "slain and burned at Dublin through the miracles of God and Saint Keenan."<sup>9</sup> After this followed a time of

<sup>6</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D., 848.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, A.D., 857.

<sup>8</sup> *Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill*, xxv.

<sup>9</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D., 878.



comparative peace, during which "the land had rest forty years." This brings us to the beginning of the tenth century.

The history soon begins to repeat itself with painful uniformity ; and we have once more the story renewed of burning and slaughter and plunder. In 949, for example, the Annalists tell us that "Godfrey son of Sitric, with the foreigners of Dublin, plundered Kells, Donaghpatrick, Ardbraccan, Dulane, Disert Keiran, Kilskyre, and other churches in Meath in like manner ; but it was out of Kells that they all plundered. They carried upwards of three thousand persons with them into captivity, besides gold, silver, raiment, and various wealth and goods of every description."<sup>10</sup> We note, however, one important difference ; it is that from this time almost invariably they have one or other of the Irish tribes associated with them in their expeditions. Thus, in 938, we have the Munstermen joined with the Danes of Waterford in plundering the churches of Meath. In 951, the men of Leinster and the Danes of Limerick attack Clonmacnoise. In 967, and again in 968, we have the Leinstermen making common cause with the Danes of Dublin, and attacking Kells ; and the same thing is repeated again and again. When we come to the eleventh century, the Danes become less and less associated with the plunder of monasteries, until at last the mention of them ceases altogether. But the evil work goes on the same, perhaps one might say with increased frequency, only it is the native tribes who are the marauders. The truth is that in the meantime the Danes had become Christian ; while the natives seem to have lost whatever respect they once had for the houses of God. This fact may to some extent explain the readiness with which the Church

<sup>10</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 949.

accepted the English rule, and the new ecclesiastical system which accompanied it.

It was probably as a result of the troubles of these disturbed times that we find at this period a kind of transition from the old Irish system of independent bishops to something more nearly approaching diocesan episcopacy. Each bishop was still more tribal than diocesan ; but as the limits of the tribal territory became more clearly defined, the jurisdiction of the bishop became more and more restricted to a definite area. As a result, we find that in Meath a number of small sees were established. These afterwards became rural deaneries ; and as a matter of fact, the present rural deaneries of Meath very nearly coincide with the limits of the old bishoprics. Bishops were still occasionally to be found in some of the ecclesiastical establishments, taking their part in the monastic life, as of old, but it began to be recognised that certain districts were apportioned to the bishops residing in Trim, Clonard, Kells, Slane, Dunshaughlin, and Fore, all of which were afterwards incorporated in the Diocese of Meath. Clonmacnoise continued to be a separate bishopric up to the time of Henry VIII.

Meantime the Church, notwithstanding all its troubles, increased considerably in wealth. Those marauding chieftains who, when on a foray, were quite ready to attack a religious establishment, were exceedingly anxious, when they felt the approach of death, to make the way easy for themselves on their unknown journey, and for this end they were ready to make liberal donations, so as to secure for themselves a favourable reception in the world to come. Large grants of land were made in this way.

An interesting document has come down to us, written on some of the blank spaces of the *Book of*

*Kells*, and is worthy of a somewhat detailed notice, not merely as illustrating the subject we are now considering, but as throwing light on the law of contract as it existed in Ireland before the time of the English invasion. The document consists of seven charters,<sup>11</sup> and they give an account of various grants of land made to the community of Kells from time to time. They are the oldest Irish charters in existence, and they are of a special value because they are in the Irish language, whereas all the other old charters are in Latin. They are, says O'Donovan, "exceedingly interesting to the historian, as proving that the ancient Irish had committed their covenants to writing in their own language before the Anglo-Norman invasion; and that their chiefs, though not succeeding according to the law of primogeniture, claimed the right of binding their successors to covenants lawfully made by them—a right which Shane O'Neill and others called in question in the sixteenth century." The first charter tells how the family of Kells have granted the lands of Ballyheerin and Ballycowan, with their mills, for the support of pilgrims. The second agrees to grant for ever "Disert-Columbkille in Kells, with its vegetable garden, to God and pious pilgrims; no pilgrim having any lawful possession in it until he devote his life to God and is devout." The third relates to land at Donaghmore near Navan, which had been purchased by the "priest of Kells and his kinsmen" for eighteen ounces of gold. The fourth tells how Kildalkey was given by the king "to God and to Columbkille for ever," as an atonement for his having violated sanctuary; and it states that both the laity and clergy of Meath gave their blessing to every king who

<sup>11</sup> These Charters are printed in full, with an English translation in the *Miscellany of the Irish Archæological Society*.



should not violate this freedom for ever ; and they all gave their curse to any king who should violate it ; “ and though it is dangerous for every king to violate Columbkille, it is particularly dangerous to the king of Tara, for he is the relative of Columbkille.” The fifth charter is the lease of a house in Kells. The sixth tells how Ardbraccan was purchased from the king. And the seventh tells of land, lying between the town of Kells and the river, which was purchased for twenty-four ounces of silver, and which was, in all probability, the land which constituted the glebe of Kells up to the time of disestablishment.<sup>12</sup> From all this it would appear that the church of Kells had quite a large estate ; and no doubt that which is thus shown to be true of Kells must have been true of many other places as well.

As to property of other kinds, such as church ornaments and the like, we learn something from the story of the burglary committed at Clonmacnoise in the year 1129. A Norseman from Limerick, but bearing the very Irish name of Gillachomgain, broke into the church and abstracted from thence all the “ jewels ” on which he could lay his hands. The catalogue of the stolen goods is given. They consisted of a model of Solomon’s Temple, the standing cup of Donnough MacFlynn, a silver goblet, a silver cup with a gold cross over it, a drinking horn with gold, another drinking horn, a silver chalice with a burnishing of gold, which had been engraved by the daughter of Rory O’Connor, and a silver cup which had belonged to Kelly, Bishop of Armagh. The thief thought to escape from the country, and went successively to Cork, Lismore. and Waterford ; but whenever he went on board a ship the wind became contrary, and he was forced to return. In the end he was caught and hanged,

<sup>12</sup> Stopford, *Handbook of Ecclesiastical Law*, p. 50.

and the booty was restored. Before his execution he is said to have confessed that it was Saint Keiran who stopped the ships on which he attempted to escape, and that he used to see the saint with his crozier stopping every vessel into which he went. The chronicler adds that "the name of God and Keiran was magnified by this."<sup>13</sup>

The clergy were not slow to make use of incidents such as this, and to proclaim that their founder, though absent in body, kept his church still under his immediate protection, and was ready to avenge any injury that might be inflicted. So much was this insisted on that Giraldus Cambrensis, among other bits of curious information, gravely informs us that the saints of Ireland "appear to be of a vindictive temper."<sup>14</sup> The annalists furnish us with many examples. In 1043, for instance, the community at Clonmacnoise had some grievance against Hugh, lord of Teffia, and they came and "fasted on him" at his house at Tullaghanarvey (in the parish of Noughaval, County Westmeath); that is to say, they assembled before his door, and vowed that they would neither eat nor drink until he had granted their request. This was a terrible threat, for if any of the party were to die in consequence of the fasting, his ghost would haunt the delinquent ever afterwards. At the same time they brought the "gapped bell of Keiran," and struck it with the "Staff of Jesus," that famous crozier which had at one time belonged to Saint Patrick, and was believed to have been given to him by the Saviour Himself. But all their entreaty was in vain, and they had to go away disappointed. But now mark the sequel. "In the place where Hugh turned his back

<sup>13</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 1129, 1130.

<sup>14</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, *Topography of Ireland*, Dist., ii. chap. 55.

on the clergy, in that very place was he beheaded before the end of a month.”<sup>15</sup> Another example will suffice. The people of Brawney, in the same district of Teffia, in Westmeath, went in 1155 to Clonmacnoise, and carried off all that they could find of the pigs of Keiran’s clergy. “The ecclesiastics went after them with their shrine as far as the Fort of the Gospel, but they were not obeyed. On the following day they sustained a defeat, in consequence of disobeying Keiran’s clergy.”<sup>16</sup>

All this shows that religion had, in a great measure, degenerated into superstition, and that whatever spiritual vitality had at one time belonged to the Irish Church had almost completely disappeared. In this way again the way was prepared for the bringing in of another system.

When the Danes became Christians they introduced into the country what was practically a branch of the Church of England. They sent their bishops over to Canterbury for consecration, and owned no allegiance to the native church. Thus the two systems were brought into contact, and for a time the two churches existed side by side. But the Irish Church was never a homogeneous body, with a unity secured by a regular graded hierarchy. On the contrary, its organization reflected simply the political organization of the land. The Church in one district was independent and might possibly be hostile to the Church in another. This want of cohesion was a great source of weakness, and rendered it as impossible for the Irish Church to retain its independence when brought into contact with the unity and power of the Church of Rome, as it was for the Irish nation to retain its independence

<sup>15</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 1043.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, A.D. 1155.



when brought in contact with the unity and power of the English. The parallel between the two cases is striking and instructive. The English adventurers first came to Ireland on the invitation of one of the native princes, who hoped that thereby he would be strengthened against his own countrymen of another tribe ; but in the event both parties were alike subdued, and those who had invited the stranger were deprived of their independence just as much as the others. Similarly, in the Church there were two parties, the one retaining its old forms and asserting its national independence, and the other inclining to the Papal system, which had established itself all over western Europe, and which actually existed before their eyes in the Danish settlement. Many were attracted to this latter, because it seemed to give the Church a power which it did not possess in other parts of the country, and because they fondly hoped that it would enable them more effectually to resist the oppressions of the native princes. But they did not carry the whole country with them, for there were still some who clung to the old ways, and preferred the tribal organization with all its drawbacks. These resisted all attempts at change. Once more the stranger was called in. On the invitation of Bishop Malachy of Armagh the Cistercian Order came into the country, and began to instruct the people, who up to that time " may have heard of the name of a monk, but had certainly never seen one." <sup>17</sup> The foundation of that new monastery at Mellifont was as real an invasion as was the landing of Strongbow and his followers in the kingdom of Leinster ; and the result in both cases was the same ; the invader held his ground, and eventually subdued the whole country.

<sup>17</sup> Bernard, *Vita S. Malachiæ*, chap. xvi.

The Diocese of Meath is connected with this movement in a very especial way from the fact that the Synod of Kells, at which a hierarchy was for the first time established, was held within its borders.

The events which led up to this synod may be briefly recapitulated. Malachy, who, though an Irishman, is said by his biographer to have derived no more from the barbarous country that gave him birth than the fishes do from their native waters,<sup>18</sup> was the leading spirit in the Romeward movement, and for the accomplishment of his purpose had set his heart on obtaining the Pope's pall, which would be at once an acknowledgment of the authority of Rome, and at the same time would raise the See of Armagh to archiepiscopal rank. He therefore made his way to Rome and laid his case before the Pope. He was very graciously received, and was appointed Papal Legate in Ireland, but was told that before granting the Pall it would be necessary to assemble a general council in the country, from which a request should be sent, and that then His Holiness would accede to his wishes. On his return he set to work at once to satisfy these conditions. It is hard to say, at this distance of time, whether the project obtained any great support in Ireland, but it is certain that the Council which he assembled was very far from being general. It was held in one of the islands off the coast of Skerries, in what was then Danish territory, and it was attended by comparatively few of the native ecclesiastics. It is probable also that some of those who did attend were not altogether aware of how far they were surrendering their independence. The men of Armagh evidently thought that they and they alone were to be recipients of the favour, and were greatly dis-

<sup>18</sup> Bernard, *Vita S. Malachie*, chap. i.

appointed afterwards when they found that Cashel also was to receive the Pall. Both Armagh and Cashel were disappointed when they found that Dublin and Tuam were to be included. The truth seems to be that each party thought that it was to receive something that would raise it above its rivals, and it was too late when they found out that the policy of Rome was to assert its own supremacy and no other.

Malachy himself took charge of the petition which the synod had adopted, and undertook a second journey to Rome in order that he might present it in person. He, however, died on the way, having gone only as far as the monastery of Clairvaux, where his bones were laid to rest. His companions continued the journey after his death, and as a result of their mission, a cardinal, Papiron, was commissioned to proceed to Ireland, where he was to assemble a synod, and at it to present the palls. At the same time he was to consult with the Irish ecclesiastics as to the proper measures that should be taken for the better propagation of the Christian faith, and for the more effectual edification of the people. This synod met at Kells in the year 1152.

The Synod of Kells marks an epoch in Irish Church history, for it was a formal acknowledgment of submission to the Roman See. Beyond the distribution of the Palls to the four archbishops very little business was done. There was, however, an attempt to establish diocesan episcopacy, and, with this in view, the number of bishoprics was reduced. Decrees were made against simony and usury, and it was ordered that concubines should be put away, which probably meant that the celibacy of the clergy should be enforced. The system of tithes also was introduced, and it was ordered that these should be regularly paid.



The cardinal, coming straight from the refinement and civilization of Italy, must have regarded Ireland as a very barbarous country. Nor were his experiences altogether happy. He seems to have been waylaid in one of his journeys, and horses, mules and asses were all taken from him.<sup>19</sup> So we can well imagine that on his return to Rome he gave his master anything but a glowing account of the condition of the country. It was not long after his return that Pope Adrian issued his famous Bull, which invited the English king to attempt the conquest of Ireland, and perhaps this may to some extent explain the language of that document, in which the task set before the English is said to be that of "enlarging the borders of the Church, setting bounds to the progress of wickedness, reforming evil manners, planting virtue, and increasing the Christian religion."<sup>20</sup>

The Diocese of Meath may be said to date its existence as a separate see from the time of the Synod of Kells. It was then decreed that all the minor sees of the district should be suppressed, and that their jurisdiction should be centred in the rule of one prelate. The work of consolidation was not completed for some years afterwards, and the Bishops of Duleek and Kells continued to hold their sees independently for at least half a century. The office of Archdeacon of Kells, a reminiscence of the ancient bishopric, continued down to the time of Henry VIII., when it was united to the bishopric of Meath. It has been held ever since, *ex officio*, by the bishop of the diocese.

Amongst those who attended the Synod was Eathruadh O'Miadhachain, Bishop of Clonard, called by English writers Eleutherius. He continued in his

<sup>19</sup> *Leabhar Breac*, quoted by King, *Church History of Ireland*, p. 1048.

<sup>20</sup> *Bull of Pope Adrian IV.*

see until after the coming of the English, and died in 1174. His successor, Eugene, held the see for twenty years, and a little before his death assumed the title of Bishop of Meath, which has continued to be the designation of the see to the present day.

The Bishop of Clonmacnoise, Murtough O'Maolidhir, was also present at the Synod of Kells. He survived until the year 1188, but seems to have resigned his see some years before his death. His successor, Tighernach O'Broin, died in 1172. Little is known of either of these prelates.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CONQUEST.

WE now come to a great turning point in Irish history, the coming of the English, and the subjugation of a great part of the country to the rule of King Henry II. Giraldus Cambrensis dignifies this event with the name of a "conquest," and, following him, the word has been ever afterwards retained ; but the title is a misnomer. Not a single important battle was fought, nor did the people of the time in any way realise that the whole destinies of the land were being altered for all succeeding ages. That the idea of conquest was in the mind of the king is quite evident, for he had approached the Pope on the subject, and had obtained from him an authorization for the inauguration of the enterprise. But there were other and more pressing things that claimed Henry's attention, and so the project was allowed to lapse ; and there seemed to be no immediate prospect that anything would come of it, when unexpected circumstances opened up the way and rendered easy an achievement that might otherwise have taxed all the resources of the empire. It is manifestly outside the scope of this history to detail the various incidents of that period, but some reference is necessary in order to explain the altered position in which the district of Meath soon found itself.

Roderic O'Connor was at this time King of Connaught, and had also inherited from his father the important position of *ard-righ* or chief king, which



made him overlord of Meath. Among his vassals, was Tiernan O'Rorke, King of Breffny—a district somewhat corresponding to the present Diocese of Kilmore—and at the time of which we are speaking that prince had extended his sway over a considerable portion of Meath. He was in continual conflict with Dermot, King of Leinster, and, finding himself unable to cope with his adversary unassisted, he invoked the aid of his overlord, which was readily granted, and as a result Dermot was defeated, and practically deprived of his kingdom. The King of Leinster was deserted by many of his own followers, and altogether was in an unhappy plight, when he bethought himself of applying to the King of England for aid in his extremity. He knew very well that such help would not be given except for a good price, but he was prepared for that, and readily offered that he would become the vassal of Henry, thus giving the English a footing in the country, provided some English soldiers were sent to help him in retrieving his fallen fortunes.

Such an offer must have had great allurements for a man like King Henry, but the time was not propitious. There was war in France and disaffection in England, and so no soldiers could be spared. All he could do was to authorize Dermot to act on his own account, and enlist the services of any British subjects who would be content to go as soldiers of fortune, and enrol themselves under the banner of the Irish prince. Dermot found some difficulty in procuring allies, even with this authorization, but at length he persuaded the Earl of Pembroke—commonly known as Strongbow—to take up his cause, and to that nobleman he held out the alluring prospect of obtaining his daughter, Eva, in marriage, and thus securing for himself the succession to the regal dignity.

The number of this first expedition was ridiculously small—so small that if any determined effort had been made to repulse them, they would have been utterly annihilated ; but their coming seems to have attracted little or no attention outside Leinster. The event was regarded as concerning the internal affairs of that province, and with these the other kingdoms of the country had nothing to do. While these English knights were fighting side by side with the men of Leinster, and reducing the towns of Waterford and Wexford to obedience, King Roderic was busy with local disputes in Meath, and was endeavouring to re-establish the ancient glories of the kingdom by holding once more the “ Fair of Teltown.” The people delighted, then, as in later years, to assemble “ in their thousands,” and the fair was pronounced a great success. The crowd of horses and men is said to have extended from Oristown, which is beside Teltown, on the one side, to the Hill of Loyd, which is between four and five miles distant, on the other.<sup>1</sup> Thus the people of Meath seemed to be utterly unconscious that an enemy was already within the gates who would not rest until he had subdued the whole country.

In the meantime the affairs of Dermot continued to improve, and he became once more established in his kingdom. He then proceeded to attack the neighbouring kingdom of Ossory, and, according to the custom of the time, devastated the whole of that country. This roused King Roderic to action, and he accordingly led an army into Leinster, for the purpose of punishing his troublesome vassal. But he displayed no hostility to the English adventurers ; on the contrary, he did his best, though without success, to attract them to his own side. In the end he made

<sup>1</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 1168.

peace with Dermot, the latter agreeing to acknowledge him as *ard-righ*.

This treaty was not lasting. Reinforcements came from England, and these so strengthened Dermot's position that he renounced his allegiance, and as an act of hostility to his overlord led an army into Meath. He plundered Clonard, and proceeded to burn Kells, Teltown, Dowth, Slane, Dulane, Kilskyre, and Disert-Keiran. Strange as it may appear, a large number of Meathmen sided with Dermot in this attack on their own territory. It is evident, therefore, that there can have been no great loyalty to Roderic among his subjects in Meath, and this fact may perhaps explain why that monarch made no effort to repel the invader of his kingdom, and contented himself, by way of reprisals, with killing the hostages which had been given to him when the treaty was made.

Shortly after this Dermot died, and Strongbow, as had been agreed, succeeded to the kingdom of Leinster. If this arrangement had been allowed to stand, the result would have been most extraordinary. An English nobleman would have taken his place as one of the Irish princes, and if, as was most probable, he followed the ambitions of his father-in-law, would have soon established himself as chief king, and would have held all the native rulers as his vassals. King Henry, however, now intervened. He had done nothing so far to secure the conquest of Ireland, but he was by no means disposed to see his own subject ruling in that country, and possibly becoming a thorn in the side of his kingdom. He accordingly gave orders that Strongbow and all the English mercenaries should return at once to their own land. If Strongbow were to obey this order it would mean that he lost the brilliant prize for which he had contended. If he



disobeyed it, he would incur the hostility of the king, and his position was not sufficiently secure to enable him to take so bold a step. He compromised the matter by unconditionally surrendering all his conquests, and receiving them back as representative of the King of England. When he returned to Ireland, Henry came with him, and took formal possession of the province which he had gained without the fighting of a battle or the expenditure of a single penny.

The native princes seem to have acquiesced readily in the arrangement which was thus made. Indeed they vied with one another in seeking the friendship and protection of the new-comer. As for Meath, it had already been conquered by the King of Leinster, and now passed, almost without question, into the possession of the King of England. A treaty was made with King Roderic, which confirmed him in possession of his kingdom of Connaught, and with that he was content.

Hugh de Lacy was now appointed to the lordship of Meath, and the powers which were thus bestowed were little short of regal ; indeed King Henry in his charter says that De Lacy was to hold Meath in the same way as the former king had held it. He began at once to strengthen his position by the erection of castles, and in these strongholds his followers were always able to defend themselves when attacked. The Irish scorned such defences, and declared proudly that they preferred the song of the birds to the squeak of the mouse ; but they soon found out their mistake, and began to know that wherever the Norman fortress stood, there the Norman power was firmly established.

But De Lacy did more than strengthen himself with defences such as these. He was a wise man, and knew that the best way of consolidating his power

was by promoting the welfare of the people. He, therefore, "made it his first care to restore peace and order, reinstating the peasants who, after they had submitted to the conquerors, were violently expelled from their districts, in the deserted lands which from barren wastes now became cultivated and stocked with herds of cattle. Having thus restored confidence by his mild administration and firm adherence to treaties, his next care was to enforce submission and obedience to the laws on the inhabitants of corporate towns, thus gradually bringing them into subordination. By these means, where his predecessors had spread ruin and confusion, he restored order ; and where they had sown toil and trouble, he reaped the happiest fruits. In short, he had in a little time restored tranquillity over so vast an extent of country, so munificently provided for his own partisans out of the possessions of his fallen enemies, and such was the liberality and courtesy with which he won the hearts of the Irish people and drew around him their natural leaders, that a deep suspicion arose that his policy was to usurp all power and dominion, and, throwing off his allegiance, to be crowned as king of Ireland." <sup>2</sup>

After these eulogistic observations, Giraldus gives us a description of the personal appearance and character of the man which is somewhat disappointing. He says, "If you wish to have a portrait of this great man, know that he had a dark complexion, with black, sunken eyes, and rather flat nostrils, and that he had a burn on the face from some accident, which much disfigured him, the scar reaching down his right cheek to his chin. His neck was short, his body hairy and very muscular. He was short in stature, and ill-proportioned in shape. If you ask what were his

<sup>2</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, *Conquest of Ireland*, ii., 20.

habits and disposition, he was firm and steadfast, as temperate as a Frenchman, very attentive to his own private affairs, and indefatigable in public business and the administration of the government committed to his charge. Although he had great experience in military affairs, as a commander he had no great success in the expeditions which he undertook. After he lost his wife he abandoned himself to loose habits, and not being contented with one mistress, his amours were promiscuous. He was very covetous and ambitious, and immoderately greedy of honour and reputation."

Such was the man who now, with almost undisputed sway, took over the government of Meath. He had only one rival. This was Tiernan O'Rorke, who still claimed jurisdiction over those districts in Meath which had been granted to him under King Roderic. De Lacy did not altogether deny his claim, but suggested that a friendly conference should be held, at which the limits of the territory of both should be strictly defined. Accordingly it was arranged that the two should meet at the Hill of Ward, near Athboy, and it was stipulated that both should come unarmed, so that there could be no breach of the peace. That neither party trusted the other is shown by the fact that they had posted supporters at convenient distances. As to what followed, both parties accuse the other of treachery. On the one side it is asserted that O'Rorke produced a battle axe from beneath his robe and attacked De Lacy;<sup>3</sup> and on the other side it is alleged that O'Rorke was "treacherously slain."<sup>4</sup> However it was, O'Rorke was killed by the followers of De Lacy, and his headless body sent to Dublin and exposed on the walls. Thus the last competitor was

<sup>3</sup> Giraldus.

<sup>4</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters.*



removed, and De Lacy was left the undisputed lord of the whole of Meath.

In all these events, the influence of the Church, as far as we can judge, was consistently on the side of the English. From the time of the Synod of Kells the Romanizing party had grown rapidly in power and importance, and those who belonged to it saw in the coming of the English the means of furthering the cause which they had at heart. In the original bull of Adrian, the Pope had evidently given voice to this party when he exhorts Henry to "labour to extend the borders of the Church; to teach the truths of the Christian faith to a rude and unlearned people; and to root out the weeds of wickedness from the field of the Lord." In using language like this he was only re-echoing the words of Saint Bernard, who, in his turn gave voice to the sentiments of Bishop Malachi. When the English were actually in the country the ecclesiastics held a synod at Armagh, but the only conclusion they could come to was that the invaders were quite justified in their actions. After much discussion they unanimously resolved, "that it appeared to the synod that the Divine vengeance had brought upon them this severe judgment for the sins of the people, and especially for this, that they had long been wont to purchase natives of England as well from traders as from robbers and pirates, and reduce them to slavery; and that now they also, by reciprocal justice, were reduced to servitude by that very nation. For it was a common practice of the Anglo-Saxon people, while their kingdom was entire, to sell their children, and they used to send their own sons and kinsmen for sale in Ireland, at a time when they were not suffering from poverty or famine. Hence it might well be believed that by so enormous a sin the buyers

had justly merited to undergo the yoke of servitude, as the sellers had done in former times. It was therefore decreed by the aforementioned synod, and proclaimed publicly by universal accord, that all Englishmen throughout the island who were in a state of bondage should be restored to freedom.”<sup>5</sup> The good bishops seem to have gone out of their way to search for some matter in which the Irish had done injury to their neighbours on the other side of the Channel, and the only incident they could think of was this traffic, long since discontinued, as indeed they admit, for it was when the Anglo-Saxon kingdom stood entire that the practice was in vogue. Such a resolution would never have been adopted by men who regarded the invaders as their enemies.

Even Laurence O’Toole, who has been made such a heroic patriot by some modern writers, was far more solicitous for the privileges of the Church than for the welfare of the people. When Dublin was besieged by the allied forces of Dermot and Strongbow, he no doubt negotiated with the besiegers for good terms for his flock ; but the chief benefit that he obtained was that “the clergy might remain in their situations,” and that the books and ornaments which had been pillaged from the churches should be restored. When, at a later period, he attended the Council of Lateran, he very freely promised King Henry, before setting out, that he would not act in any way so as to injure the interests of the realm of England or its monarch.

We can scarcely blame these churchmen for the stand which they took. The native kings seem for a long time to have cast aside all respect for sacred things, and it was hard for a church to flourish when those who ought to have been its supporters were

<sup>5</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, *Conquest of Ireland*, ii., 18.

foremost in robbing and despoiling it. To them English rule meant a strong power which they believed would be continually exercised on their behalf. If they could have foretold what would really happen, possibly they would have acted differently ; but the gift of prophecy was not theirs.

Returning now to Meath, we recall the fact that within the space of two or three years it had passed from the possession of an Irish prince to that of an English king.

Though the change was effected without battle or bloodshed, it constituted a veritable revolution. It meant the destruction, as far as it was possible, of everything that was Celtic, and the transformation of Meath into an English county. Henceforth, amid all the changes and vicissitudes of succeeding years, Meath never ceased to belong to the "Pale," but continued to be one of the strongholds of the British government. Whatever communities of Celtic monks continued were soon dispersed, their property was confiscated, their lowly dwellings and churches were destroyed, and new buildings, of grander proportions, but of foreign design, took their place. De Lacy built abbeys and churches all over the district ; yet, when recording his death, the Irish annalists only remember his deeds of spoliation, and speak of him, not as the founder, but as "the profaner and destroyer of many churches." <sup>6</sup> His castles served as strongholds for himself and his retainers ; and the abbeys that sprang up beside them were, like the castles, the outward manifestation of the advent of a new order of things.

The abbeys that were thus founded grew rich at the expense of the Church. One of the favourite ways of endowing an abbey was to "appropriate" to it a

<sup>6</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, A.D. 1186.



certain number of parishes. This meant that the income of these parishes was taken by the monastery, and the spiritual duties were performed either by one of the monks who happened to be in Holy Orders, or else by a vicar, to whom a miserably insufficient salary was paid. Already, even in the time of Bishop Eugene, we find appropriations of parishes in the Diocese of Meath to the abbeys of St. Mary and St. Thomas, in Dublin; and as time went on, the number increased more and more, until in the end the income of three-fourths of the parishes of the diocese were thus alienated from their purpose. The evil effects of this system will come before us again and again, and continued down to our own time.

The policy of the English from the first was to exclude the Irish as far as possible from all share in the government of the Church. In a letter from King Henry III. to the Justiciary of Ireland, written in 1217, he says: "As the peace of Ireland has been frequently disturbed by elections of Irishmen, the King commands that for the future no Irishman be elected or promoted in any cathedral. By counsel of Henry, Archbishop of Dublin, the King directs that his clerics and other honest Englishmen, useful to the King and his kingdom, be elected and promoted to sees and dignities when vacant."<sup>7</sup> The Pope, by a mandate issued in 1220, denounced this statute as void, and in 1224 sent a letter to the clergy of Ireland, annulling the "iniquitous decree made by some Englishmen, that no clerk of Ireland, however good and learned he may be, should be promoted to any ecclesiastical dignity."<sup>8</sup> The Pope's protest, however, was quite unavailing, and the rule continued to be enforced

<sup>7</sup> *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, preserved in H. M. Record Office, London.

<sup>8</sup> *Calendar of Papal Registers*.

wherever it was possible to do so. In 1285 a State Paper lays down that "it would be expedient to the King that no Irishman should ever be archbishop or bishop, because they always preach against the King, and always provide their churches with Irishmen." On the other hand the Irish seem to have made an attempt at retaliation. A Bull of Innocent IV. informs us that the King had complained to him that "the archbishops and bishops in Ireland had ordained that no Englishmen should be received as canon in their churches;"<sup>9</sup> and His Holiness directs that this ordinance be revoked, otherwise it is to be denounced as null and void. Thus it will be seen that the sectarian bitterness which has been the cause of so much evil in the land existed long before the time of the Reformation, though many people imagine that it arose altogether from the differences which separate Protestants from Romanists. It will also be seen how early the English initiated the bad system, to which they adhered for so many centuries, of using the Church in Ireland for political purposes.

From what has been said above, we need not be surprised to find that as soon as the bishopric of Meath became vacant, an Englishman was appointed to it. The choice fell on Simon Rochfort, who was consecrated in the year 1194. He is said by Ware to have "exercised his episcopal function with so much fidelity, vigilance, and integrity, especially in settling the clergy of his diocese, with such probity and meekness, that he obtained the name of an excellent bishop."<sup>10</sup> Under him the Abbey of Tristernagh, at Kilbixy, was founded by Sir Geoffrey de Constantin, and he granted to it "the privileges of a free church-yard, where any

<sup>9</sup> *Calendar of Documents* in Record Office, London.

<sup>10</sup> Ware's *Bishops*.

person dying within his diocese may be buried without opposition." He also founded the Augustinian Abbey of Newtown, near Trim, and erected its church into a cathedral. In doing so, he removed the episcopal seat from Clonard to Newtown.

The most interesting event of his episcopate was the Council or Synod which he assembled at Newtown, at which canons were passed for the better regulation of the diocese. As these are important in themselves, and form besides one of the earliest documents connected with the diocese, they may be given here in full.

CONSTITUTIONS made in the Cathedral Church of SS. Peter and Paul, Newtown, near Trim, By Simon, by the Grace of God, Bishop of Meath, at a Synod held there in the year 1216.

Forasmuch as Master John Paparo, Cardinal Priest under the title of Saint Laurence in Damaso, and Legate in Ireland of the Supreme Pontiff and Lord, Eugenius III., in a General Synod held at Kells in Meath, in the year of Grace 1152, among other salutary regulations then and there made, ordained that on the death of the Chorepiscopi and Bishops of the smaller sees in Ireland, there should be chosen in their places and should succeed to them Archpresbyters, to be appointed by the Diocesans, who should have the care of the clergy and people within their districts, and that in their sees an equal number of ruri-decanal chapters should be set up; therefore We the Bishop aforesaid, in compliance with his ordinance, enact and order as follows :—

I. First, That in the churches of Trim, Kells, Slane, Skryne, and Dunshaughlin, which were at one time episcopal sees in Meath, but are now heads of rural deaneries, for the future arch-presbyters be appointed, that they may not only reside continually and personally in those same churches, but that they may also undertake the care of the clergy and people within the limits of their deaneries.

II. That no one be ordained arch-presbyter unless he



has been already made presbyter, under penalty of being removed from his office.

III. Item. When the office of arch-presbyter shall become vacant by death or any other cause, his successor is to be chosen by us or our successors, because his jurisdiction belongs to us.

IV. Item. That the arch-presbyters yearly, and oftener if necessary, shall ascertain by personal visitation the state and condition of all the churches within their deaneries ; and if any church needs repair, they shall exhort the Lord's Flock to repair it ; and they shall take care to forward to us the Acts of Visitation at the next synod. They shall also see whether the roofs of the clergymen's houses and of the chapels are in good repair. They shall endeavour to reform any corrupters of morals among the people, and if they are not able to break them off from their evil practices, they shall bring the matter before the Diocesan Synod, in order that the question may be considered, with the advice of the clergy, as to what should be done for their amendment.

V. Item. That they shall cause to be transmitted to us in synod a faithful description of the state and condition of the books, vessels, vestments, and other ornaments and furniture of the churches within their deaneries, so that, whenever necessary, we may make an order for their repair.

VI. They are to take care, moreover, concerning canonical penances, rightly imposed by us or our officials on wrong doers ; and these should be performed and fulfilled solemnly in the churches within their districts, they with the parochial clergy being present as witnesses, so that they may be able to testify with what humility and devotion the works of penance have been discharged.

VII. Item. That on their admission to office they shall take an oath that they will faithfully perform their duty. Item. They shall enquire and present to us and our officials the names and surnames of all and

everyone within their deaneries who publicly and notoriously are accused or strongly suspected of any crime or infamy, in order that they may be punished and corrected by our authority.

VIII. Item. That they shall diligently, by themselves or by their deputies, cause the rural chapters to be convened in the principal places in their deaneries every three weeks, and at other times they shall hold extraordinary meetings, at our discretion, if it shall seem to us that there is anything to communicate to those assemblies of the clergy.

IX. In these chapter meetings they shall themselves preside, and shall regulate the subjects to be considered by the clergy as to the common business of the deanery ; and at the same time they shall also cause enquiries to be made concerning vacant benefices, and concerning lay encroachments on benefices. They shall provide moreover that copies be made of the Provincial and Diocesan Statutes ; and immediately after each synod they shall cause them to be read in each chapter, and explained to the clergy within their districts, lest any should offend against them, offering ignorance as an excuse. They shall admonish all who have the cure of souls to publish to the people in their parishes and explain to them those rules which concern and apply to laity.

X. We prohibit to the arch-presbyters the probate of wills, the treatment of matrimonial cases, cases of simony, and all criminal cases which involve deprivation of clergy or loss of benefices.

XI. Furthermore, we strictly forbid that rural deans should presume to demand from those subject to them, either by themselves or by others on their behalf, any exactions or fees.

XII. Those who are found negligent or remiss or disobedient in the foregoing, and the same is testified by witnesses worthy of credit, may be suspended from their office by us or our successors, until they amend their ways.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> For the original of these canons, see Wilkin's *Concilia*.

It will be noted in this document that the list of deaneries omits Ratoath, Duleek, and Clonard, as well as all the deaneries of Westmeath and King's County. Most probably the diocese was as yet imperfectly organized, and the bishop may not have been prepared to appoint arch-presbyters in these places. How long bishops continued to hold office in these small sees it is impossible to say, but mention is made of a bishop of Kells as late as the year 1202. It is evident that a considerable time elapsed before the decrees of the Synod of Kells were carried fully into effect.

Bishop Simon Rochfort died in 1224, and was interred in the abbey that he had founded at Newtown.



## CHAPTER VII.

### EPISCOPAL APPOINTMENTS.

THE story of the early episcopal appointments in Meath is instructive for the light which it throws on the relationship existing between the Church of Ireland and the English monarch. It also enables us to trace the development of the papal authority ; for the Pope lost no opportunity at such times of asserting his prerogative. In every election there were four parties, whose interests were more or less conflicting, and each of them was on the look-out for any chance of gaining an advantage over the other. This led to various combinations from time to time, when perhaps two of the parties would join together in the hopes of thereby frustrating the designs of one of the others.

First of all, there was the synod, which in Meath consisted of the whole body of the clergy, presided over by the archdeacon, who thus had a precedence not enjoyed by the archdeacon in any other diocese. Nominally the election rested in their hands, but they were supposed not to take any action until the king had given them permission to elect. With the permission it was usual to suggest a name, and a suggestion under such circumstances was equal to a command. But more than once they tried to be beforehand with the monarch, and held their meeting without his licence, for however irregular such an election might be, it was something in the candidate's favour if he had received the suffrages of the clergy. Having thus committed

themselves, they were always ready to apologise, to make excuses, and to pray for pardon, well knowing that it was often politic for the King to overlook their offence, particularly as their action was in all probability taken with the connivance of the government officials in Ireland. There seem to have been attempts from time to time to reduce the number of the electors. Although there was no cathedral, the State Papers mention twice a "prebend" of Skryne, to which "James of Spain, cousin of Queen Alienor, Queen of England," was appointed in 1283; and the *Vatican Records* tells us of a "prebend of Galtrim." This would seem like an attempt to form a Chapter, similar to that which existed in other dioceses, but it does not appear to have been very successful. It is by no means probable, however, that the whole body of the clergy were ever allowed a real voice in the choice of a bishop.

The second party was the Archbishop of Armagh. He had the right of consecrating the Bishop of Meath, because he was one of the prelates belonging to his province, and this was supposed to give him a certain power of veto and of interference if there seemed to be any doubt as to the validity of the election. Of one of these archbishops it is said that "he was an inveterate enemy to such Englishmen as were preferred to bishoprics in this kingdom, and laid them under all the difficulties in his power." We shall see presently how he stretched his prerogative so far as to consecrate his own nominee in defiance of both King and Pope.

The third party was the King. He required and endeavoured to enforce that his licence should be obtained before any election was held, and he generally had some nominee of his own that he wished to advance; for it was a matter of importance to him that the bishop

should be one favourable to the English interest. It was one of the easiest methods also of rewarding those who had rendered political service.

Finally, there was the Pope, ever watchful to advance the power of the Holy See, and finding abundant opportunities of doing so in the contentions of these rival parties. As a general rule—though by no means always—he sided with the King ; but the very fact that the monarch had to invoke his aid helped in the support of his pretensions. Nevertheless, there was in Ireland, as in England, continual friction between the two, and the compromise which was at length arrived at was somewhat extraordinary. It was this : the Pope appointed the bishops by “provision,” but generally chose the candidate recommended by the King. The bishop, having obtained the Papal Bull, then applied to the King for the restoration of the temporalities of the See ; but to obtain these he was required to renounce all clauses in the Pope’s Provision which interfered with the King’s prerogative, and a fine was imposed on him for having acknowledged the Pope’s supremacy. He was then allowed to take possession of the bishopric. We will find all this well illustrated in the episcopal appointments made in Meath from the Anglo-Norman invasion down to the time of the Reformation.

We have already spoken of Bishop Simon Rochfort. In 1202 he was candidate for the Archbishopric of Armagh. A second candidate was Ralph le Petit, Archdeacon of Meath ; and a third, one Humphrey de Tikehull. All three asserted that they had been duly elected, but the King decided in favour of the last, and when he died, while the cause was pending, he transferred his favour to Archdeacon Ralph. Humphrey’s candidature was not well received in the country, and



the opposition became so strong that an appeal was made to the Pope. King John wrote to his Holiness complaining that the Bishops of Clogher, Clonmacnoise, Kells (the last mention of the See of Kells), and Ardagh, had "shown a manifest desire to work against the King's right and dignity." The Pope, however, set aside all three candidates, and appointed Eugene MacGillevider, "which so incensed the King against him that he gave warning to all his suffragans not to acknowledge him." The final victory remained with the Pope, for the King had to give way in the end and Eugene enjoyed the See until his death, which took place in 1216.<sup>1</sup>

Coming back to Meath, we find that when Simon Rochfort died in 1224, the clergy met at once, without waiting for the King's licence, and elected as his successor one Deodatus. Their action was connived at by the justiciary, who had his own reasons for desiring the advancement of the bishop whom they had chosen. He also obtained the King's pardon for the offence, which was granted "out of love for the justiciary, for this once."<sup>2</sup> The new bishop survived his elevation for only a short time; indeed it is not certain whether he was ever actually consecrated, and so, almost immediately, the See became again vacant.

This time the King determined to be beforehand, and therefore wrote at once to the Archbishop of Armagh, saying that with the letter he "sends Walter de Brackley, clerk of the chamber, released from the trammels of the Court, that he may be more freely promoted, as the King desires, to the See of Meath." At the same time he committed the revenues of the See into Walter's hands, to hold as long as it remained

<sup>1</sup> Ware's *Bishops*; Mant, *History of the Irish Church*, vol. i., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> The principal authorities for the events recorded in this chapter are the State Papers preserved in the Record Office, London.

vacant. The clergy, having already had experience of what was possible in the way of carrying their point against the somewhat impaired authority of the monarch, met, however, without waiting for the royal licence, just as on the former occasion, and elected their own archdeacon, Ralph le Petit—the same who had been candidate for the Archbishopric of Armagh. The King was furious ; but in the end he had to give way. In a rather ill-tempered letter to Geoffrey de Marisius, Justiciary of Ireland, who probably, as before, was at the back of the whole business, he asserts in strong words his kingly rights, but at the same time gives a grudging consent to what was done in contravention of those rights. Henry III. was one of the weakest of English kings, and this letter of his is a true reflection of his character. He reminds Marisius that “ the King had *viva voce* prohibited the justiciary from granting licence to elect without first obtaining the King’s consent, and now he repeats that mandate. The justiciary had in this case given the licence, and the clergy had elected Ralph le Petit, an honest and discreet man, suited to the Church and faithful to the kingdom. The King, on account of the probity of the man, gives his consent. The King commands the justiciary, with Henry, Archbishop of Dublin, and John, Bishop of Ferns, to go to the elect, and if, notwithstanding his decrepitude and age, the latter confesses that he will on peril of his soul undertake the charge, then the justiciary shall give the King’s assent.”

As might have been expected from this description of Bishop Ralph, the See was soon again vacant. He died, a very old man, in 1230, and once more the King endeavoured to promote his friend Walter de Brackley. As on the former occasion, he gave him custody of the

vacant See, but again he was checkmated by the clergy. They met as before, without waiting for licence, and elected Richard de la Corner, a Canon of Saint Patrick's, Dublin, but connected with one of the most important families of Meath. They did not carry their point so easily this time ; and two years elapsed before Richard was consecrated. The King gave his consent in 1231, endeavouring, as on the former occasion, to assert at the same time his rights ; for he demanded that before the temporalities were restored " sufficient security should be given to the King, by letters patent of the clergy, that it will not hereafter tend to the prejudice of the kingly dignity that the election took place without the King's licence." This, however, did not end the matter, but, unfortunately, we have no materials to furnish us with the remainder of the story. As late as September 2, 1232, we have John, Bishop of Ferns, referred to as " elect of Meath," showing that there was still another candidate, of whom no mention had been made before. Eventually, before the conclusion of that same year, Richard was consecrated. He held the See until his death, which happened in 1250.

After this the story repeats itself, for once more there was a renewal of strife. The clergy had been so successful up to this in securing the appointment of their own candidate, that we can scarcely wonder at their again adopting the same tactics. When the See became vacant there were two candidates, Geoffrey de Cusack and Hugh de Taghmon, the latter of whom was favoured by the King. As to the election, there is a conflict of authorities. According to the *Vatican Records*, Hugh was duly elected, and his election confirmed by Milo, the official of the Archbishop of Armagh, who was acting for the primate during the absence



of the latter at Rome. But the archbishop, instead of accepting the act of his deputy, assumed that the power of appointment had lapsed to him, and put Geoffrey into the vacant See. The English State Papers, on the other hand, imply that an election had taken place without the royal licence, at which Geoffrey was chosen. However that may be, it is certain that the archbishop carried things with a high hand, and actually consecrated Geoffrey as Bishop of Meath. All parties then appealed to the Pope—the first occasion, as far as old records inform us, of such an appeal having been made from Meath. It was a costly proceeding, and Hugh, who was always more or less impecunious, had to borrow two hundred pounds to meet his expenses.<sup>3</sup> He paid his proctors in what was to him a less expensive way, by giving them two benefices apiece in his diocese.<sup>4</sup> The Pope appointed the Bishop of Killaloe, the Archdeacon of Waterford, and the Minister of the Franciscans in Ireland, to hear the case; and the King wrote to them, pointing out that “it has ever been the custom that, in vacancies of Sees in Ireland, licence to elect should be demanded of the King, and that on the election, the King’s assent should be required, as was done in the last vacancy of the See of Meath, namely, before Richard, formerly Bishop of Meath, was elected.” He then expresses his astonishment that the Archbishop of Armagh and Brother Geoffrey de Cusack should oppose the King’s right in this respect. He might perhaps have reasonably expressed his astonishment if the facts had been as he had stated; but as we have seen, the very opposite was the case. The King’s licence had not been demanded before Richard’s election, and it was this very fact

<sup>3</sup> *Vatican Records.*

<sup>4</sup> *Vatican Records.*

that emboldened the archbishop and made him believe that in the end the King's opposition would give way. The King used another argument with the Pope's commissioners which was as unworthy as this was untrue. He threatened that he would seize their temporalities unless they so bore themselves that the kingly dignity should suffer no lesion. He also wrote to the archbishop requesting him to give way, and got the Bishop of Winchester to appeal to him also on the same subject. The appeals thus made were without effect. The archbishop absolutely refused to withdraw his candidate, and it is hard to see how he could have done so, seeing that Geoffrey had been actually consecrated. An appeal was also probably made to Geoffrey himself, for in July, 1253, the King writes to the Bishop of Connor, and tells him that Brother Geoffrey de Cusack, whom the Archbishop of Armagh had appointed to the See of Meath, had retired. But if this was really the case—and we have already seen that the word of the King was not to be implicitly relied on—Geoffrey must have thought better of his retirement afterwards, for in the following year we have his rival, Hugh, writing to the King, and complaining that "Geoffrey de Cusack bears himself as bishop, and was consecrated by the Archbishop of Armagh, in lesion of the kingly dignity, as he had not obtained the royal assent." Feeling seems to have ran high. On the one hand, several of the clergy and laity, supported by the archbishop, took part with Geoffrey; and on the other hand, Hugh issued sentence of excommunication against those who thus opposed his entrance into the bishopric. In May, 1254, the King, writing to the Justiciary of Ireland, orders him to arrest those excommunicated by Hugh, "according to the custom of Ireland," and to remove lay resistance, if

any should be found in the churches. The King adds that "the justiciary shall be all the more diligent in executing the premises, as the archbishop and Brother Geoffrey are endeavouring to supersede the King's licence to elect in the church of Meath, which would greatly injure the King's right." And so the struggle went on, until, shortly after this, Geoffrey died. The archbishop's friends in Rome then brought pressure to bear upon him not to pursue the contest any further, and in the end he gave way, and consented to the election of Hugh de Taghmon. The Pope then gave his verdict in his favour,<sup>5</sup> and eventually he was consecrated, but not until nearly six years had elapsed since the See had become vacant.

It is hard to say who carried off here the spoils of victory. The King, no doubt, eventually obtained his desire, but it was only after the nominee of the archbishop had been removed by death. The Pope's decision counted for little in the matter, since it was only delivered when the contest was ended, and a compromise had been effected. On the whole, the Archbishop of Armagh seems to have come off the best, as his candidate held the field, in spite of all opposition, as long as he lived.

There is yet another contest to record, which occurred on the death of Hugh de Taghmon, in 1281. This time the clergy were more dutiful than on former occasions. They sent notice to the King of the death of their bishop, and requested the royal licence to elect. This having been granted, they chose one of their own number, John de Dubilton, Archdeacon of Meath; but he having refused the honour, they gave their votes again, and this time chose the Archdeacon of Kells, Thomas St. Leger, and forwarded his name to the

<sup>5</sup> *Vatican Records.*



King, who thereupon gave the royal assent. For some reason or other, the appointment was not acceptable to the Archbishop of Armagh and he refused to confirm it. An appeal was thereupon made to the Pope, and St. Leger went himself to Rome to press his suit ; but in his absence the primate appointed and consecrated Walter de Fulburn, Dean of Waterford. Edward I. was now king, and we might naturally expect more firmness from him than from his immediate predecessors. He immediately sent a mandate to the archbishop ordering him to attend at Drogheda, and to answer there a number of charges that had been made against him, amongst others, " that he newly consecrated the Bishop of Meath, no licence being demanded nor fealty taken." This, however, did not advance matters very much. The archbishop cared little for such a tribunal, and refused to attend. A sentence of excommunication was then pronounced against him, but that really meant very little when those who pronounced it were unable to enforce it. So he continued to be contumacious, and defied the King. A letter from the archdeacon of Meath to the Bishop of Bath and Wells, written towards the close of the year 1285—that is, after the contest had lasted more than four years—shows how little hope there was then of a settlement, and besides, throws some light on the motives which were at the back of the whole thing. The archdeacon recounts how " St. Leger had come to the Court with letters of the clergy of Meath, to present himself to the King, to obtain the royal assent according to custom, to his election, and to pray letters to the Pope, touching its confirmation, because the Archbishop of Armagh, by whom it ought to be confirmed, had been made incapable by sentence of excommunication long since passed upon him. On

account of injuries and grievances inflicted upon them by the same archbishop, they had appealed to the Apostolic See against him. Wherefore he ought to be held suspected in all matters touching their elect and their church. The Irish are hostile to the English, and cease not to disturb their peace. He therefore prays the bishop to come to their aid, by directing letters of the King and of himself to Cardinal H. and others, praying them to promote and defend the affairs of the elect and of the clergy of Meath."

There was one advantage in the system of making appeals to Rome : it discouraged litigation, for it was so very costly that men thought twice before prosecuting such an appeal. In this instance both the candidates did as was often done in such cases to save expense. They both resigned their claims, and left the disposal of the See altogether in the Pope's hands. His Holiness did his best to please all parties. He pleased the King and the clergy of Meath, for he declared their nominee to be duly elected ; and he pleased the archbishop and Walter de Fulburn by appointing the latter Bishop of Waterford. Now comes the most surprising part of all. This Thomas St. Leger, thus declared to be Bishop elect of Meath, and already one of the dignitaries of the diocese, being Archdeacon of Kells, and it is to be supposed, holding the living with cure of souls which always went with that archdeaconry, the rectory of Nobber, was not in Holy Orders at all. The Pope gives him letters, "authorizing him to be ordained deacon and priest by any bishop of his choice, and to be consecrated by two or three others, without prejudice to the rights of Armagh." <sup>6</sup> The dispute and litigation in this case lasted for over six years.

<sup>6</sup> *Calendar of Papal Registers.*

This is the last of our contested elections. At the next vacancy, which did not occur until 1321, the Pope took the matter into his own hands, and did not wait for King or clergy, but appointed independently John O'Carroll, whom he translated from Cork. This appointment, therefore, marks an epoch from which we may date the complete subjection of the Church of Ireland to the See of Rome. And yet the subjection was not as complete as would appear at first sight. This same prelate was afterwards promoted by the same authority to Armagh, but in that case he was compelled to renounce any clauses in his "provisional letters" which were prejudicial to the King's prerogative, and he had to pay a fine for having accepted a Papal Provision. Thus a protest was made against the claims of Rome, and, although they were acquiesced in, they were not acknowledged. The succeeding Bishops of Meath were mostly appointed in the same way. Sometimes there was the form of an election; but the Pope ignored it, even when he appointed the candidate that had been elected. In so far his supremacy was established. But in nearly every case the bishops thus appointed were required to renounce, and actually did renounce, all clauses in the Pope's Provision that were inconsistent with the King's prerogative. Often they had, besides, to pay a fine. On the whole the system worked with remarkably little friction, for the Pope, as a general rule, appointed the King's nominee, and the fine came to be regarded more as a tax than as a punishment. All the same, the facts should be borne in mind by those who would understand the action taken at the time of the Reformation. The claim that Henry VIII. made, that he was the "Head of the Church," was not a new one. It was a claim that had been enforced by the early Norman



kings, and though allowed to fall into abeyance, it had never been abandoned. These same facts will explain, what has often been a puzzle to historical investigators, how it was that so many of the Irish bishops, under Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Elizabeth, though their sympathies were far from being with the Reformation, were quite ready to take the oath of supremacy. In doing so, they were only following the example which had been set by their predecessors, and which had been tacitly allowed through so many years by the authorities at Rome.

It may be well to add here that an ancient seal belonging the synod of the clergy of Meath, was long preserved in the registry, and was seen by the author about twenty years ago. It has since disappeared, and there seems now to be no way of accounting for the loss. As one of the most interesting relics of pre-Reformation days it was of priceless value, and it is hard to understand how within such a recent period it has been allowed to pass from the possession of the diocese. Some electrotpe copies of it had happily been made by the Rev. W. F. Faulkner, the present Rector of Killucan, and one of them is now in possession of the Bishop ; but to the regret of all antiquaries the original seems to be hopelessly lost.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ANGLO-NORMAN MONASTERIES.

ONE of the most striking results of the Anglo-Norman Invasion of Ireland, from the Church history point of view, was the springing up of monasteries, with more or less magnificent abbey churches, all over the land.<sup>1</sup> Within about one hundred years of their advent, nearly all those abbeys were erected, of which so many ruins still exist ; and yet, only a few survive, for the greater part of them have been quite obliterated. The only Meath abbey that dates from before that time—and that only by a few years—is the Cistercian establishment at Bective, which was founded as a daughter monastery to the abbey of Mellifont.<sup>2</sup>

The Cistercians had come into prominence early in the twelfth century, chiefly through the influence of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, who was at the height of his fame when he was visited, as we have seen, by Bishop Malachy of Armagh. Before the Irish bishop parted from his friend, with whom he would have dearly loved to remain, if that had been possible, he left some of his companions with Bernard, in order that they might learn from him what they were afterwards to teach to their own countrymen. “They will be a seed,” said Malachy, “and in that seed shall nations be blessed.”<sup>3</sup> On his return to Ireland, he sent others to augment the number, and when

<sup>1</sup> Archdall's *Monasticon* is the great authority for the foundations of abbeys, etc., other sources of information are indicated in the notes.

<sup>2</sup> Mageoghegan, *Histoire de l'Irlande*.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard, *Life of Malachy*, Chap. XVI.

these had served their probation, they were admitted as members of the order. It was by these that Mellifont was founded, and from it, as from a parent hive, a swarm went forth and founded Bective.

The ruins which still exist testify to the important position which Bective at one time occupied. There is, however, very little history connected with it. There was an extraordinary dispute between this abbey and that of Saint Thomas in Dublin, concerning the body of Hugh de Lacy. His head somehow came into possession of the Dublin monks, while his body was interred at Bective. Both parties claimed the right to have possession of the complete corpse. If De Lacy had been a saint, whose relics were to be venerated, there could scarcely have been a greater contention about it. For ten years the fight went on, and in the end it had to be settled by the Pope, who deputed the Bishop and Archdeacon of Meath with the Prior of Duleek to adjudicate in the matter. By their decision the monks of Saint Thomas obtained the much coveted prize.<sup>4</sup>

There was another Cistercian house, founded about the year 1200, by the Dalton family, at Kilbeggan in the County Westmeath. It was called "De Flumine Dei," and was also a daughter monastery of Mellifont.<sup>5</sup> One of its abbots, William O'Fynnan, was made Bishop of Clonmacnoise in 1298.<sup>6</sup> No vestige of this abbey now exists.

If the Cistercians were the first, the Augustinians were by far the most popular of the religious orders founded in Meath. They were less severe in discipline than monks properly so called, and were particular favourites in England just at this time. Some

<sup>4</sup> Harris's *Ware*.

<sup>5</sup> Mageoghegan.

<sup>6</sup> Ware.



branches of the Order charged themselves with the care of the sick, and several hospitals were established under their auspices. Although the Anglo-Normans first came to the country as late in the twelfth century as 1170, yet before the century closed they had already founded several Augustinian establishments in Meath. Among the earliest was that of Clonard, which was erected by Walter de Lacy, in 1175, on the site of the old Celtic monastery.<sup>7</sup> In the same neighbourhood—at Ballyboggan—another priory was founded by Jordon Comin, which was dedicated to the Holy Trinity, and was sometimes called the Priory de Laude Dei. There was here a miraculous crucifix, which used to attract great numbers of pilgrims. It was publicly burnt in 1538.<sup>8</sup> In this, as in most of the establishments founded by the Normans, no Irishman could be elected prior. In 1399 an attempt was made to appoint one John O'Mayller, but on appeal to the King he was dispossessed, and an Englishman, Richard Cuthbert, put in his place.<sup>9</sup>

The earliest adventurers, as we know, came directly from Wales and the English counties adjoining. After settling in Ireland, they did not forget their old home. Already, on an ancient Celtic site in Monmouthshire, where Saint David is said at one time to have had his cell, and where, according to another tradition, Saint Paul himself laboured, they had founded the Augustinian Priory of Llanthony. They now founded daughter monasteries, one at Colpe and another at Duleek,<sup>10</sup> the inmates of which owed allegiance to the prior of Llanthony. Of Colpe no remains are preserved, and the site is now occupied by the Parish

<sup>7</sup> Mageoghegan.

<sup>8</sup> Ware's *Annals*.

<sup>9</sup> Cogan, *Diocese of Meath* (quoted from King.)

<sup>10</sup> Mageoghegan.

church, but at Duleek, the old tower and part of the priory church are still standing, and form a picturesque feature in the landscape.

The abbey of Navan was founded about this time by Joceline de Angulo. This name appears sometimes as Nangle, and sometimes as De la Corner, both forms commemorating the "corner" or "angle" of Pembrokeshire in which the family was settled. The name was borne by two knights, Gilbert and Joceline, who obtained large grants of land in the County Meath. Gilbert became possessed of the whole barony of Morgallion, and Joceline obtained Navan and Ardraccon.<sup>11</sup> Navan soon became one of the most important towns of the Pale, and was naturally chosen as the site of a great abbey. At first, however, the endowments seem to have been small, and we have the prior and brethren asking in 1267 for licence to elect an abbot, without being obliged to go to England with their petition, urging as a reason that they had "very poor temporalities."<sup>12</sup> In after years they obtained a source of considerable income, in the form of a miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin, to which pilgrimages were made from all parts of the country. As a proof of the importance to which the establishment afterwards attained, it may be mentioned that in 1457 the abbot, John Bole, was elevated to the Archbishopric of Armagh.<sup>13</sup> The site of the abbey is now occupied by the disused cavalry barracks, and no vestige remains of the ancient buildings.

The Augustinian monastery of Mullingar was founded by Ralph le Petit,<sup>14</sup> when he was Bishop of

<sup>11</sup> *Song of Dermot and the Earl*, Orpen's translation, 31-42.

<sup>12</sup> *State Papers*.

<sup>13</sup> Ware.

<sup>14</sup> Mageoghegan.

Meath. The district around Mullingar had been granted to the Petits by Henry II., and was for a long time known as "Petit's Barony." As late as 1596, and probably much later, it was largely inhabited by people of this name. Several priors of Mullingar belonged to the family, and the last of the series, who was dispossessed at the time of the Dissolution, was named John Petit. It seems to have been liberally endowed; not much of its history, however, has been preserved.

The monastery of Saint Mary, Kells, must also be placed amongst the earliest Norman foundations. It owed its origin to Hugh de Lacy, Lord of Meath, and it soon took its place amongst the most important of the abbeys. Its abbot took the highest rank, and on some occasions was entrusted by the Pope with such business as the deciding of a disputed episcopal election or the hearing of a charge of misconduct against a bishop.<sup>15</sup> The property of this house seems to have been considerable, including the tithes of several parishes, but, notwithstanding this, we find the brethren complaining, in 1302, of their "small temporalities," which they ask the King to restore when they will have elected a new abbot.<sup>16</sup> There were some remains of this abbey until a comparatively late period, but they are now completely obliterated,

Hugh de Lacy also founded an Augustinian abbey at Durrow,<sup>17</sup> and at the same place began the erection of a castle. It was here that he met with his death, for he was murdered by an Irish youth, who had disguised himself as a workman. In the *Dublin Penny Journal* of June 15th, 1833, there is figured an old monastic seal, which had been found at Lynbury,

<sup>15</sup> See several entries in the *Calendars of the Vatican Records*.

<sup>16</sup> *State Papers*.

<sup>17</sup> Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*



near Mullingar. It is engraved on both sides, and on one side professes to be the seal of "M., Abbot of St. Mary's, Durrow," and on the other, of "M., Abbot of St. Mary's, Trim." Dr. Petrie, judging from the style of workmanship and form of letter used in the inscriptions, assigned these seals to the close of the thirteenth century. It is evident that at the date of manufacture, this "M.," whoever he may have been, was at once abbot of Durrow and also of Trim. It was the age of pluralities, when the aim of churchmen seems to have been to obtain as many offices as possible, without any regard to the thought of how they would be able to perform the duty.

Saint Mary's Abbey at Trim, the "yellow steeple" of which forms such a conspicuous feature in the ruins at that place, dates from the latter part of the thirteenth century,<sup>18</sup> and is, therefore, a little later than the monasteries mentioned above. It was founded by the De Lacy family, and soon became one of the most famous in Ireland. Here, as at Navan, there was a miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin, and in both places there were special facilities given for pilgrims, whether Irish or English, who wished to visit the shrine.<sup>19</sup> Under ordinary circumstances, Irishmen were not permitted to enter these strongholds of the Pale, but the revenue derived from the devotion of visitors was so great that it was deemed advisable to make some relaxation in their case. In 1402, King Henry IV. "took under his protection all pilgrims, whether liege men, Irish, or rebels, going on pilgrimage to the said abbey, according to immemorial privilege." And in 1415 we have the same king petitioned by the community of Saint Mary's, "showing that they and their predecessors had this privilege, that all Irish rebels

<sup>18</sup> Butler, *Trim Castle*. He gives the date as 1276.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

and liege men of whatsoever condition, wishing to come to said place for the sake of pilgrimage in honour of the Blessed Mary, could go there, stay there, and return from thence, without impediment of the King, of the lords of Meath, or of any other person whatsoever, by reason of debt, or other action or cause whatsoever, until of late, when certain persons, coming there for the sake of pilgrimage in honour of the Blessed Mary, were arrested and imprisoned, to the detriment of the abbot and convent, and of divine worship ; especially as the said abbot and convent scarcely have any means of living, save from the oblations made there by the devout in honour of the Blessed Mary.”<sup>20</sup> The King, therefore, once more took all such persons under his protection.

This “idoll of Trym,” as the reformers called it, was publicly burnt in the year 1538, and at the same time the treasures of the abbey, amounting to the large sum of £1,861 15s. 2d., were confiscated. Amongst these treasures were gold and silver vessels, and doubtless many works of art, which would have been priceless if they had been preserved to the present day.

It has been already mentioned that the monastery at Tristernach had the privileges of a “free churchyard.” It may throw some light on the meaning of this if it be mentioned that in 1317 there was a suit between the brethren of Trim and those of Tristernach for the possession of the body of Rosina de Verdon.<sup>21</sup> She had bequeathed herself to Trim, but by some means or another, it happened that she was buried at Tristernach, and the prior of this latter place refused to give up his prize. The matter was referred to the Pope, but how the dispute was at length settled is not recorded. The possession of the body carried

<sup>20</sup> Butler's *Trim Castle* (quoted from *Patent Rolls*).

<sup>21</sup> *Calendar of Papal Registers*.

with it a certain amount of income, derived from the prayers and masses which were to be said for the deceased.

Almost more important than the abbey of Trim was that of Newtown, in the immediate neighbourhood, which was founded by Bishop Simon Rochfort in 1206.<sup>22</sup> The chapel of this establishment was, as we have seen, used as a cathedral for the Diocese of Meath. Much of the property belonging to this community was situated on the borderland of the Pale, and therefore became "much wasted, sore decayed, and diminished." Nevertheless its church continued to be regarded as the cathedral for at least three centuries. In 1386 the Bulls of the translation of Alexander de Balscot from the See of Ossory to that of Meath were published here ; and as late as the year 1518, we have it described as "the cathedral church of Saint Peter of Newtown, near Trim," in the account of a synod held there in that year by Hugh Inge, Bishop of Meath. Attempts had been made from time to time to make some other arrangement, but without effect. In 1155 Hugh de Taghmon applied to Rome for leave to build a new cathedral, and a faculty was actually given authorizing him to do so, "with the assent of the Archbishop of Armagh and the clergy of the diocese, there being no chapter."<sup>23</sup> No further action seems to have been taken at this time but in 1379 the King sent a petition to the Pope, setting forth that the bishopric of Meath, although it had a certain defined diocese with two archdeaconries having cure of souls, had no cathedral church, canons, or chapter. It was suggested that the church of the monastery of Trim was fit to be erected into the cathedral church, and it was proposed that the name of the monastery

<sup>22</sup> Butler, *Trim Castle*.

<sup>23</sup> *Vatican Records*.



might be extinguished, and its church erected into the cathedral church, with the title of the church of Meath; that there might be instituted therein twelve canonries and as many prebends for twelve secular persons, and four other dignities with cure, besides the two archdeaconries, namely, those of a dean as a major elective dignity, precentor, chancellor, and treasurer, likewise to be assigned to secular persons only; which sixteen persons should, with the archdeacons, form the chapter; that sixteen parish churches of the said church of Meath might be united and appropriated to the twelve prebends which should be named thereafter, and one to each of the said four dignities; that the goods of the bishop might be separated from those of the capitular mensa; that no more canons regular might be admitted, and that the goods movable and immovable, rights, jurisdictions, lands, and possessions might, after the death or translation to other monasteries of the prior and canons, remain to the capitular mensa; and that the said twelve canons and the said dean and other dignitaries might have the election of the bishop.

This proposal seemed reasonable, and would have placed Meath on a par with every other diocese in Ireland. If it had been carried out, no doubt, the church would have been preserved, and Meath would now be able to boast of one of the finest cathedrals in the land. The Pope was inclined to receive the petition favourably, and appointed a commission of enquiry, consisting of the Archbishop of Armagh, the Bishop of Clonmacnoise, and the Abbot of St. Thomas the Martyr without the walls, Dublin. The monks of Newtown intervened, however, and sent a counter petition, setting forth that of old there had been a cathedral church at Clonard, but that John, sometime

cardinal priest of St. Stephen's on the Coelian, then papal legate in these parts, had transmuted it thence to the place then called Novimidia by Trim, now called in Latin, Novavilla, or vulgarly Newton by Trim; that at length Simon, sometime Bishop of Meath, with the assent of Eugene, sometime Archbishop of Armagh, and of all the clergy of the diocese, instituted there an Augustinian prior and canons, assigning for its construction and for their sustentation, mills and other goods then belonging to the episcopal mensa, as is said to be more fully contained in his letters patent.<sup>24</sup> The Newtown monks gained the day, and the Pope revoked his commission, and so their chapel continued to be a pro-cathedral, until at the end they were dissolved with the rest of the monasteries of Ireland.

There is an extraordinary story preserved in the State Papers, which throws a curious light on monastic life in the fourteenth century. We learn that in 1307 the prior, Richard Sweetman, was accused of murdering one of the friars by stabbing him with a knife, and of assisting his brother William to kill another of them. It seems that there was considerable discontent amongst the inmates, consequent on some restrictions as to diet introduced by the prior. They met together and vowed that they would have drink as much as formerly, and a riot ensued, in which two of the brethren, who had made themselves somewhat obnoxious, were killed. It is impossible from the account to make out if these two were the same as those whom the prior and his brother were accused of murdering—possibly they were. When brought before the court for trial, the prior pleaded that as a clerk, he was not obliged to answer, and thereupon

<sup>24</sup> *Vatican Records.*

the abbot of Saint Mary's, Trim, appeared for the bishop of Meath, and claimed that the accused should be handed over to him. Bail was given for the appearance of the prior at the next assizes ; but there the story ends abruptly, and we have no record of how it eventually terminated.<sup>25</sup>

The ruins of Newtown are amongst the most striking of those to be seen in the neighbourhood of Trim. The chapel which served so long as a cathedral, must have been always a building without architectural pretensions. It consists simply of a large nave, without choir, chancel, or transepts. There are, however indications of what must have been a fine groined roof. A figure carved in stone, formerly belonging to a tomb, and popularly said to be King John's daughter, is probably the effigy of the founder, Bishop Simon Rochfort.

A monastery of Crossbearers, who were a branch of the Augustinians, was founded at Kilkenny West, by Friar Thomas Dillon, and was supported up to the time of the dissolution by the Dillon family. Eventually the possessions of the abbey were granted to the representative of the original founder at a small crown rent.<sup>26</sup>

Almost the last of the Augustinian monasteries of Meath was that of Skryne, founded in 1341 by Lord Francis de Feypo.<sup>27</sup> His ancestor, Adam de Feypo, was one of the companions of De Lacy, and obtained from him a grant of possessions in that district.<sup>28</sup> The ruined church of Skryne, the only part that remains of the old abbey, forms a striking feature in the landscape, and, standing as it does in a command-

<sup>25</sup> Butler's *Trim Castle*.

<sup>26</sup> Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*.

<sup>27</sup> Mageoghegan.

<sup>28</sup> *And Skreen he then gave by charter : To Adam de Phepoe he gave it.* Song of Dermot and the Earl (Orpen).



ing position on the top of the hill, is seen from most parts of the County Meath.

There remain to be mentioned three Augustinian nunneries, Clonard, Lismullen, and Odder.<sup>29</sup> The earliest of these was the convent of Clonard, which must have been founded immediately after the Anglo-Norman Invasion. Indeed, by some it is said to have existed before that date, and to have been established by O'Melaghlin, King of Meath. In the *Taxation of the Diocese of Meath*, compiled in 1302,<sup>30</sup> it is stated that the temporalities do not suffice for the burdens, which seems to imply that it was not a very rich community, yet it seems to have had considerable possessions. It became eventually a cell to the nunnery at Odder. It was declared by the Pope in 1195 to be exempt from all ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

Lismullen was founded in 1240 by Alicia de la Corner, sister of the Bishop of Meath. It was largely endowed by the foundress and her family, and in course of time became one of the most important of such institutions in the Kingdom.

Not far distant from Lismullen was the nunnery of Odder, founded by the Barnwall family, shortly after their arrival in Meath, that is, towards the end of the twelfth century. At the time of the dissolution it had possessions in Meath, Louth, Dublin, Kildare, Carlow, and elsewhere.

Allied to the Augustinians were several orders who undertook the care of the sick, and whose establishments were generally called hospitals. Such were the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem, the Knights Templars (in their later history), the Trinitarians, and some others. These may conveniently be classed together. The Knights of Saint John had

<sup>29</sup> Mageoghegan.

<sup>30</sup> Printed in *Calendar of State Papers*.

establishments at Kilmainham Wood, and Kilmainhambeg <sup>31</sup> (now Kilbeg in the union of Moynalty), the latter founded by Walter de Lacy in the twelfth century, and the former by the Preston family in the thirteenth. Not much record remains of either of these houses, and no relic of their buildings has been preserved. There was also a preceptory of the same order at Beaumore, in the parish of Colpe. It likewise has disappeared. The Trinitarians had priories at Mullingar and at Kells. The site of the latter is now used as a Roman Catholic burying ground. The Crutched Friars had an hospital at Newtown, near Trim, founded by one of the Bishops of Meath. <sup>32</sup> The ruins are situated at the bridge, which marks what was at one time a ford of the river, and are somewhat extensive, and well preserved. There were also two priories at Drogheda, on the Meath side of the Boyne, the one dedicated to Saint John the Baptist, and the other to Saint James. The name of the latter is preserved in St. James's Gate. Very little is known about any of these establishments, but the fact that so many of them did exist may help to show that the old monasteries were not always such useless institutions as is sometimes supposed. In an age when the care of the sick was but little understood, it must have been an inestimable boon to have these houses set apart for the reception of the suffering.

The establishments of other religious orders were not so numerous. The Benedictines had, as far as we can learn, only two houses—one at Ballymore, and the other at Fore. <sup>33</sup> This was perhaps the most distinguished of all the monastic orders. Its members were remarkable for their gentlemanly manners, as

<sup>31</sup> Mageoghegan.

<sup>32</sup> Butler's *Trim Castle*.

<sup>33</sup> Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*.

well as for their artistic and literary tastes. In England and Scotland they have left architectural remains, which excite wonder and admiration even in their decay. In our country, however, their relics are less remarkable. Ballymore or Loughsuedy Abbey was founded by the De Lacy family in 1218. It admitted as inmates both monks and nuns, who occupied different parts of the building. The church at Loughsuedy was for a time, in the reign of Henry VIII., used as a cathedral for the diocese.

The Benedictine abbey of Fore has a somewhat romantic story connected with its foundation. In the reign of King John, the two brothers, Walter and Hugh de Lacy, having fallen under the royal displeasure, fled from the country, and took refuge in Normandy. There they disguised themselves, and took employment as common farm labourers in the Benedictine abbey of Saint Taurin, at Evreux, and continued in this lowly occupation for some time. Their bearing and demeanour, however, attracted the attention of the superior, who after a time began to suspect that they were not the peasants that they pretended to be. He soon learned their story, and lost no time in interceding with the King on their behalf, with the result that he obtained for them a renewal of the monarch's favour, who consented, on the payment of a fine, to restore them to their possessions in Ireland. The abbey of Fore was built as a thank-offering for this deliverance, and was made a cell to the abbey of Saint Taurin. When Normandy ceased to belong to the King of England, Fore became, by that fact, an "alien priory," and as such was seized into the King's hands, along with many others, in 1369,<sup>34</sup> there being war at that time between England

<sup>34</sup> *State Papers.*



and France. Subsequently power was given to the monks to elect their own prior, and the authority of the abbey of Saint Taurin was abrogated. It continued as a Benedictine Monastery to the time of the dissolution. The ruins are still very extensive, and in good preservation. Besides the abbey, there are, in the same neighbourhood, remains of an old Celtic church, with Cyclopiian building, and the tower of a more modern church, which was used as a hermit's cell in the seventeenth century. This last has attached to it a mortuary chapel belonging to the Nugent family.

Another "alien priory" was that of Beaubec,<sup>35</sup> near Colpe, which was founded in the reign of King John by Walter de Lacy, as a cell to the Benedictine abbey of Saint Laurence of Beaubec in Normandy. In 1322 it was assigned to the abbey of Furness in Lancashire, and from that time became a Cistercian house, as which it continued up to the time of the dissolution. The Cistercians and Benedictines were branches of the same order.

The Carmelites were originally an order of hermits established on Mount Carmel in the middle of the twelfth century. They sometimes, however, claim an earlier origin than this, and trace themselves back to the prophet Elijah. They also say that the Blessed Virgin was herself a Carmelite nun. In the thirteenth century they were driven out of Palestine by the Saracens, and spread all over Europe, and about the same time they were changed into a mendicant order. One of their principal establishments in Ireland was founded at Athboy in 1317,<sup>36</sup> by William de Loundres. The De Loundres family was a branch of the Cusacks, and was connected also with the Plunketts, who at a very early date came into possession of the property

<sup>35</sup> Mageoghegan.

<sup>36</sup> *Ib.*

in this neighbourhood. A Provincial Chapter of the order was held here in 1325, and another in 1467.<sup>37</sup> The square tower which at present forms the belfry of the church is all that now remains of the conventual buildings.

Saint Mary's church, Drogheda,<sup>38</sup> owes its origin to a Carmelite monastery which was founded there by the inhabitants of that town in the thirteenth century. It derived a considerable portion of its income from the tolls on butter entering Drogheda by what is now called in consequence the Butter Gate. Just before the time of Oliver Cromwell the Carmelites retook possession of the church, and celebrated Mass in it. They were, however, expelled immediately after the siege.

There was a Carmelite friary at Ardnacranna, in the parish of Noughaval (part of the union of Kilkenny west). It was founded in the fourteenth century by Robert Dillon, Lord of Drumrany. At the dissolution it came back again into the possession of the Dillons, but the representative of the family, James Dillon, allowed the monks to remain in occupation of their property, and it was only some time afterwards that they were dispossessed. Only slight remains of the abbey are now preserved.

There are in the possession of Sir Robert Hudson, Bart., some interesting fragments of stained glass, and the family tradition is that they were taken from an old church in Westmeath, now in ruin. The inscription would point to a church belonging to the Carmelites, and if so, the window most probably formerly belonged to the abbey of Ardnacranna, the only Carmelite establishment in Westmeath. As this is the only example of stained glass belonging to the

<sup>37</sup> Brennan's *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*.

<sup>38</sup> Mageoghegan.

pre-Reformation period which can be associated with the Diocese of Meath, it is worthy of a somewhat detailed notice. The Rev. G. D. Scott, Curate of Bray, made a careful examination of the glass at the request of the author, and writes that it is dreadfully broken, some of it into very small pieces, and that a good deal of sorting and fitting was necessary in order to get a few pieces of the design complete. He, however, was able to recognize the following pictures: (1) The meeting of SS. Angelus, Francis, and Dominic. (2) A fragment of an interior scene, in which beneath a round-headed window of two lights, a monk's head, with halo, looks down upon another figure. (3) A fine figure, wearing a wide-brimmed scarlet hat with cords, and carrying a crozier, with two crossbars, and with trefoils at the five points. (4) Another fine figure wearing a richly embroidered gold and red chasuble, beneath which appear the ends of a blue stole, and an alb with lace frill. Hands uplifted as in blessing. (5, 6, 7, 8) Figures of angels, filling rectangular spaces nearly square. There were also two inscriptions, in plain Roman characters, as follows:

OBVIUS HIC ROMÆ FRANCISCO FACTUS EIDEM  
PRAEBET AMICITIAE PLURIMA SIGNA SUAE.  
STIGMATA FRANCISCO PRAEDICIT PRIMUS, AT ALTER  
ILLI MARTYRII FATA FUTURA REFERT.

This manifestly refers to the first picture, and may be rendered, "Saint Dominic (hic) having met Saint Francis at Rome, affords him very many proofs of his friendship. Saint Dominic (primus) foretells to Saint Francis the miracle of the Stigmata, and Saint Francis (alter) declares to Saint Angelus (illi) the fate awaiting that martyr."



The second inscription reads thus :

B. IOES SORETH NORMANNVS  
XXV GNALIS VIR INGENIO SUBTILIS,  
VITA & CONVERSATIONE DEVOTVS,  
ORD. CARM. DECVS, SPLENDOR & RE-  
FORMATUR, TOTVS DEO ET ORATIONI  
INTENTUS SANCTISSIME VITA FINIVIT  
ANDEGAVIS AO. 1471.

This is more difficult of translation, and it is hard to say what the words "xxv gnalis" in the second line mean. Possibly they may imply that he was the twenty-fifth general of the order. If that be so, the inscription may be rendered, "The Blessed John Soreth, a Norman, twenty-fifth General of the Order of the Carmelites, a man subtle in talent, devout in life and conversation, the ornament, luminary and reformer of the Order of the Carmelites, wholly dedicated to God and to prayer, most piously closed his career at Angers in 1471." <sup>39</sup>

The late Bishop Reeves was greatly interested in this curious relic, though he never had the opportunity of personally inspecting it. In a letter to a correspondent he gives the following particulars of the life of the Blessed John Soreth, who is commemorated in the second inscription :—

Jean Soret or Soreth was born in Caen in 1420. He made profession in the Order of Carmelites at the age of sixteen, and removed to Paris, where he was admitted Doctor in Theology. He was elected Provincial of his Order in 1451, and subsequently became the General. Pope Pius II. and Callistus III. honoured him with their friendship, and the latter was desirous to promote him to the cardinalate and to make him a bishop, but Soret persistently refused acceptance of these dignities. He carried out the reform of all the houses of his Order in which there was relaxation of discipline, and although

<sup>39</sup> *Church of Ireland Gazette*, August 5th, 1904.

he had to encounter many obstacles, his patience and discretion crowned him with success in all his undertakings. He upheld, above all, the interests of the bishops, on their conforming to the rules, and he was exposed to a multitude of dangers in arresting the disorders, which he did not feel satisfied with in merely dealing with by regret. Thrice he assembled the Chapter-General of his order, and established five convents of Carmelites. He was poisoned at Nantes, and retired in utter prostration to Angers, where he died on the 25th of July, 1471. When he was almost in the pains of death, he framed some excellent statutes, the observance of which he recommended to the adoption of his religious brethren. Rene, King of Sicily and Duke of Anjou, often went to offer up his prayers at his tomb." 40

There was also a Carmelite monastery founded at Kilcormick (now better known as Frankfort, though the postal authorities have restored the ancient name), in the parish of Ballyboy, in the King's County. This establishment was founded by Odo or Hugh Molloy, at the beginning of the fifteenth century. A missal is preserved in the library of Trinity College, which at one time belonged to this monastery. There is a calendar prefixed to it, in which are entered some obituary notices,<sup>41</sup> chiefly of members of the Molloy family. From this we learn that the founder, Hugh Molloy, died on the first of October, 1454, and "was buried in the monastery of Kylcarmich, before the high altar, on the feast of Saint Remigius." The "obits" go down to the year 1577, which is later than the date of the dissolution of the monasteries. From this we may conclude that here, as in so many other places, the monastery continued in existence for some time after that event.<sup>42</sup> The site of the abbey is at present occupied by the Roman Catholic church, but no traces of the ancient buildings remain.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Bishop Reeves to Dean Brougham of Lismore. *Church of Ireland Gazette*, June 24th, 1904.

<sup>41</sup> These obits are published in the *Miscellany of the Irish Archaeological Society*.

<sup>42</sup> *Irish Archaeological Miscellany*.

The Dominicans were a great Order of preaching friars, and one of the earliest—if not the very earliest—of the mendicant Orders. They were founded in 1215, and almost at once attained the greatest popularity. As early as 1237 a branch was established in Meath, their first monastery having been founded in that year at Mullingar. This house soon attained to great importance, and several general chapters of the Dominicans were held in it.<sup>43</sup> Shortly afterwards (1241) another branch was founded at Athlone. It was begun by Cathal Dearg O'Connor, prince of Connaught, and the building was completed in the following year by Sir Henry Dillon. A third Dominican friary was established at Trim in 1263. It was founded by Geoffrey de Geneville, one of the most famous men of his day, and soon attained the highest importance. In 1308 the founder resigned the lordship of Meath, and entered as a friar in the monastery which he had himself established, ending his days there in the year 1314. Dean Butler, speaking of him, says, "It is to be lamented that our notices of the varied life of this great man are so meagre, that we cannot fill up the outline of the young noble of Champagne wooing his wealthy bride in the court of England, retiring with her to his great seignories in Ireland, and joining with her in founding a religious house; taking the cross in the Holy Land; administering for a short time the government of his adopted country, busy for years in the councils and campaigns of the bold and politic Edward I., and closing his career by the resignation of his lordship of Meath to his youthful grand-daughter and her ambitious husband, and ending his days in the habit of a Dominican in the cloister which he and his wife had built fifty years before."<sup>44</sup> This friary

<sup>43</sup> Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*.

<sup>44</sup> Butler's *Trim*.



was situated near the Athboy Gate. No vestige of it now remains.

The Franciscans were, like the Dominicans, a preaching Order, and with them our account of the Anglo-Norman abbeys ends. Their first establishment in Meath was probably the Grey Friary of Trim, which was founded, some say by King John, while others ascribe it to the Plunkett family. It occupied the site on which the Court House stands at present.<sup>45</sup> The abbey of Multifarnham was founded in 1306 by the Delameres. It soon rose to considerable importance. It is chiefly remarkable, however, for having been almost the last of the Irish abbeys, for by the connivance of the barons of Delvin it continued to be held by the monks long after the dissolution. Father Hugh Ward, who wrote a history of the Order, says of it that "it never was more flourishing than since the beginning of the persecution, and the spread of heresy, for not only was it a place of refuge to the old and infirm friars of the province, but was as it were an ark in the deluge of persecution, for from its first foundation it never was deserted for any length of time by the religious."<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, it became also a great centre of disaffection, and was the principal place from which operations of the rebellion of 1641 were conducted. There still exist some remains of the old abbey, and in fairly good preservation.

The last Meath abbey to be founded was the Franciscan monastery of Slane, erected in 1512 by Christopher Fleming,<sup>47</sup> Baron of Slane, and Catherine Preston his wife. The ruins still crown the hill, and form a conspicuous feature in the landscape.

<sup>45</sup> Butler's *Trim Castle*.

<sup>46</sup> Cogan's *Diocese of Meath*.

<sup>47</sup> Mageoghegan.

## CHAPTER IX.

### CHURCHES AND CLERGY.

FROM the account given of the different foundations in the last chapter it will be easily understood what an important feature the abbeys formed in the ecclesiastical system introduced by the Anglo-Normans. These invaders became the gentry of the district of Meath, and close to every castle the abbey stood, so that in every important town, and in many country places as well, the abbey rather than the parish church became the centre of church life. These institutions answered a variety of purposes. For example, there was no poor law in those days, and the relief of distress fell almost entirely into the hands of the monks. Political economists tell us that they fostered as well as relieved pauperism, and no doubt this was to a great extent true ; but our own organization of poor relief has not been such a conspicuous success as to give us much right to criticize the methods of the olden time. The abbeys also fulfilled, to some extent, the purpose of our hospitals. Medical science was not, it is true, very much developed in those days, but at all events the sick were not left without loving care, and such measure of skill in the healing art as was at the time available. They were, besides this, public schools, not reaching the masses of the people—for the idea of popular education had not yet been developed—but affording to the sons and daughters of the gentry such instruction as was then deemed sufficient. Then,

they supplied the place of our modern hotels. Travel of course was not frequent, and men were for the most part content to live and die in the place of their birth, without going abroad to see the world ; but whenever they did travel the monasteries were the places to which they looked for hospitality. Their inmates, too, were often popular preachers, and busied themselves at times with what we would now call "mission services." The monks and friars were probably, on the average, more learned and more zealous than the ordinary clergymen. In many ways, therefore, the institution suited the age, and in judging of it we must always remember that the state of society was then very different from what it is at present.

In some other respects we may have graver misgivings as to their utility. These abbeys were in Ireland, but they were not Irish. They were founded, as we have seen, by English adventurers. They were furnished with English inmates, and in most cases they had as one of their fundamental rules that no "mere Irishman" should be admitted. Whatever beneficent purposes they fulfilled, therefore, were only on behalf of the small English minority, and never reached the masses of the people. The ordinary parish churches were very poor, and in these Irishmen often ministered. Indeed it was frequently the case that the stipend was so small that none but an Irishman could be found to accept it. The abbeys, therefore, were the English churches, where the gentry of the Pale met for worship. They were grander in their architecture, and more ornate in their services than the simple country sanctuaries, in which perhaps an unlearned Celt ministered to a few rustics. Both classes were nominally of the same religion, but the line of demarcation was very marked. It was practically as clear a distinction



as that which at present exists between Roman Catholics and Protestants. If the Normans had been content that their church should have been the church of the people, and not merely the church of the English garrison, the religious history of Ireland in after ages might have been very different from what it has been ; but alas, then, as in later years, the church, which ought to have been the great uniting power, was used for the purpose of keeping the races apart.

It will be easily understood that the connection between the gentry and the abbeys was much closer than that which existed between them and the ordinary parish churches. When a monastery was founded, the care of the patron did not cease, nor did his influence come to an end. Most of the inmates would be taken from among his retainers, and generally the abbot was chosen from among the members of his family. In his declining years it furnished him with a peaceful retreat where he could end his days, removed from the turmoil and struggle that raged round the castle, and yet not so far removed but that he could still enjoy the companionship of his family and friends. Though nominally handed over to the Church, he still regarded it as practically part of his estate. A curious result from this state of things, which came about in after years, may here be noted. When the dissolution of the monasteries took place, under Henry VIII., the confiscated church property was for the most part bestowed on the leading families of the district, and it often happened that it thus came into the possession of the lineal descendant of the original donor, and also that the abbot who gave up possession was a member of his own family.

The monasteries in Ireland never became such

powerful corporations as was the case in some parts of England. In the latter country they sometimes quite overshadowed the town, and it is said that by their exactions had rendered themselves so unpopular that the dissolution was hailed by the people as a deliverance. But in Ireland they were too much dependent on the small number of wealthy men who formed the English colony to have any such independence. At the same time the position of abbot in one of the larger houses was one of great influence and power, and hence men who would have scorned to become ordinary parish clergymen snatched eagerly at a position which was of such importance and dignity. The bishops had comparatively little authority over them, for the abbeys were generally exempted from their jurisdiction. As far as we can learn, bishops in those days were not very assiduous in asserting their authority beyond what was necessary for the collection of certain dues. They were, many of them, much more of statesmen than of ecclesiastics, and filled offices under the crown which we would imagine must have required all their energies. Thus, for example, Bishop Hugh de Taghmon (1250-1281) was Lord High Treasurer of Ireland.<sup>1</sup> His successor, Thomas Saint Leger, in common with most of the Bishops of Meath for many centuries, was a member of the Privy Council. Several others were Lords Treasurers; and one, Edward Dantsey (1413-1429), was entrusted with the whole government of the country during the absence of the Lord Deputy. It will thus be seen that they had many other interests besides the care of their diocese. But if they did at any time give a thought to their ecclesiastical duties, they found it much easier to control the ordinary clergy than to

<sup>1</sup> Ware.

impose their will upon the religious orders. We need not, therefore, be surprised that the bishops did not always favour the multiplications of monasteries. They seem to have objected especially to the mendicant orders. The most famous of these objectors was Richard, Archbishop of Armagh,<sup>2</sup> who, in a sermon preached in London in 1350, urged against them that although our Lord was poor, yet He did not love poverty in itself; that He never commanded men to beg, but on the contrary forbade them to do so; and that no man should bind himself by a vow to a life of perpetual mendicity.<sup>3</sup> He was cited for this to Avignon, where the Pope was then residing, and died there before any judgment had been passed. Whatever may have been thought of his action in his lifetime, it did not prevent him from being venerated after his death, for he had the reputation of being a saint, and the first steps towards his canonization were taken, though they were not afterwards followed up. He comes into the story of our diocese, as having preached some of his remarkable sermons in the Church of Trim, and after his death his body was translated by Stephen de Valle, Bishop of Meath, in 1370, and was brought to Dundalk, from which circumstance he is sometimes now called St. Richard of Dundalk. Others took the same line of argument as he did in objecting to the mendicants, but the friars were generally supported by the Pope, and they continued to prosper notwithstanding all opposition.

In Meath, as in other places, not merely were the abbeys held by the monks, but many of the parish churches as well. A great part of the income of the religious houses was derived from the tithes of parishes

<sup>2</sup> King's *History of the Irish Church*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ussher, *Religion Professed by the Ancient Irish*, chap. iv.



which they "appropriated." The duty was then performed by one of the community, or else they employed a "vicar," to whom they paid a small salary. In Ussher's *State of the Diocese of Meath*, he states that in his time there were in the diocese "51 rectories, 63 vicarages, and 79 cures belonging to impropriate rectories." These sixty-three vicarages, and seventy nine cures represent the parishes which in former times had been placed in the hands of the religious orders; the fifty-one rectories represent the parishes that had remained unappropriated. We may, therefore, say that in Meath about three-fourths of the parishes belonged to the monasteries. At the time of the Dissolution none of this income was restored to the rightful owners. It is well, therefore, to be reminded that it is, not only in our own day that disendowment has taken place.

Coming now to the ordinary parochial clergy, we have to enquire what was their position. As regards their incomes we are happily in possession of very full information. A tax of one-tenth was levied by the Pope for the purpose of prosecuting the wars in Palestine. It was not always applied in this way, for, as is well known, the King often managed to secure the whole or a portion of it for himself, and as a result he was the more diligent in seeing that it was duly collected. In connection with this tax we have a full account of the incomes of all the Irish parishes, drawn up in the year 1302. To this, therefore, we turn for the information for which we are now in quest. The document is too long to quote in full; it may, however, suffice to give the account of the Diocese of Clonmacnoise, where the incomes are exceptionally poor, and that of the Rural Deaneries of Duleek and Mullingar, which are the first on the list for Meath

and Westmeath, respectively, and in which the incomes are much more generous.

In making a comparison with incomes of the present day, we must remember that money was much more valuable then than it is now. Hallam, in his work on *Europe during the Middle Ages*, goes into this question, and gives as his opinion that "we may perhaps consider any given sum under Henry III. and Edward I. as equivalent in general command over commodities to about twenty-four or twenty-five times their nominal value at present." He remarks, too, that the luxury of the present day was then unknown, and that "we can hardly believe or comprehend the frugality of ancient times. . . . An income of £10 or £20 was reckoned a competent estate for a gentleman; at least the lord of a single manor would seldom have enjoyed more. A knight who possessed £150 per annum passed for extremely rich." <sup>4</sup> It is not improbable that living in Ireland was somewhat cheaper than in England, and that to multiply the incomes by twenty-five would still rather under-estimate their value in money of the present day. I have, however, adopted this estimate, and have placed opposite each parish the present value as thus calculated. When all allowances have been made, it will be seen that some of the clergy of Clonmacnoise were miserably poor.

ECCLESIASTICAL TAXATION OF IRELAND.<sup>5</sup>  
DIOCESE CLUANENSIS.

CHURCH.	Value.	Estimated Present Value.
From the Bishop of Clonmacnoise for tenth .. .. .	£4 9 2	£119 9 2
The Archdeacon of the same ..	3 16 8	95 16 8
The Dean .. .. .	1 0 0	25 0 0
From Prebends of all the Canons of the Cathedral .. .. .	1 0 0	25 0 0

<sup>4</sup> Hallam, *Europe During the Middle Ages*, chap. ix., part 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Calendar of State Papers*.

CHURCH.	Value.	Estimated Present Value.
From the Rector of Loghloch (Bally- loughloe) .. ..	£10 0 0	£250 0 0
The Vicar of the same Vill ..	3 6 8	83 6 8
The Priory of Galyn (Gallen) ..	1 0 0	25 0 0
The Vicar of Fyrn (Wherry) ..	0 10 0	12 10 0
The Community of Nuns of Killeynuneth (Killagally) .. ..	0 10 0	12 10 0
The Vicar of Tethsaran (Tisaran) ..	0 1 0½	1 6 0½
The Vicar of Lieth (? Athlone) ..	Nothing because the vicar- age is devastated by war.	
Sum of Taxation £25 3s. 6d.	Tenth 5rs. 4½d.	

We must only hope that some of these poor vicars had other means of providing incomes for themselves. No doubt they received fees for christenings, marriages, and burials, and probably most of them did a little farming on the glebe lands. It would appear also that some of them followed mercantile pursuits. In 1260 we find that Milo O'Connor, Archdeacon of Clonmacnoise, and William de Geinville, rector of the Church of Arthinurcher, acknowledge that they owe three lasts of hides to Adam de Basinges, citizen of London.<sup>6</sup> This looks like trade. The rector of Ardnurcher was not one who needed such help. He had an income of £17 6s. 8d., which, on the same calculation as we have adopted above, would represent £433 6s. 8d. of our present money. Let us hope that some of his poorer brethren were able in the same way to eke out their scanty pittances.

Things were much better in the County Meath, as will be seen by the following account of the taxation of the Deanery of Duleek (called in the Return "Develek"), though even here there were some parishes which were nothing to boast of, and the vicars, who were the real working clergy of the day, were, as may be seen, very poorly paid.

<sup>6</sup> Record Office, London.



TAXATION OF THE DIOCESE OF MEATH.  
DEVELEK.

CHURCH.	Value:	Estimated Present Value.
Fynowre (Fennor) .. ..	100s.	£125 0 0
Ardmulhan .. ..	17½ marks	291 13 4
Ballingarvey .. ..	£4	100 0 0
The Vicarage there .. ..	22s. 4d.	27 18 4
Temporalities of the House of St. Michael de Develek .. ..	25s. 4d.	31 13 4
Church of Duleek with the Chapel of Balymachlethan, Thimal et Platyn	£30	750 0 0
Church of Mora (Moorchurch) with the Chapel .. ..	20 marks	336 6 8
The Vicarage there .. ..	4 marks	66 13 4
Balionastlik .. ..	8 marks	133 6 8
Temporalities of the House of Colp	4 marks	66 13 4
Temporalities of the House of St Mary of Develek .. ..	5 marks	83 6 8
Church of the House of the same ..	5 marks	83 6 8
Temporalities of the House of Colp	24 marks	400 0 0
Church of Becno, Hospital (Leckno or Pierstown Landy)	Nothing because Hospi- tallers are Rectors.	
The Vicarage there .. ..	37s. 8d.	47 1 8
Rathfay .. ..	£10	250 0 0
Kilmone .. ..	10 marks	166 13 4
Staghmolyn (Stamullen) .. ..	20 marks	333 6 8
The Vicarage of the same .. ..	5 marks	83 6 8
Brun (Brownstown) .. ..	5 marks	83 6 8
Kilkernan (Kilcarn) .. ..	5 marks	83 6 8
The Vicarage there .. ..	6 marks	100 0 0
Ardcath .. ..	20 marks	333 6 8
The Vicarage there .. ..	6 marks	100 0 0
Nany (Julianstown) .. ..	18 marks	300 0 0
The Vicarage there .. ..	6os.	75 0 0
Clonalwy .. ..	12 marks	200 0 0
The Vicarage there .. ..	4os.	50 0 0
Church of the Vill of Kent (Kentstown)	£4	100 0 0
Church of St. Mary de Ponte (Drogheda) .. ..	6os.	75 0 0
The Vicarage there .. ..	2os.	25 0 0
Temporalities of the Monks de Villa Maris (? Mornington) .. ..	4 marks	66 13 4
Temporalities of the Monks de Bello Becco (Beaubec) .. ..	22 marks	366 13 4
Temporalities of the Monks de Villa Britone .. ..	8 marks	200 0 0
Church of the Vill of Pagan (Paynes- town) .. ..	£8	200 0 0

CHURCH.	Value:	Estimated Present Value.
Temporalities of the House of Lismolyn, to wit, Clonhouran and the Vill of Clatre .. .. .	£10 6 8	£258 6 8
Rent of the Vill of Henry and the Vill of Kynard .. .. .	£10 15 5	269 0 5
The Abbess de Othre (Odder) for her Temporalities de Balilaght .. .. .	40s.	50 0 0
Temporalities of the Abbot of Mellifont (several places specified) .. .. .	£88 11 8	224 11 8

## MULLINGAR.

Church of Mullingar with the Chapel of				
Kennegh .. .. .	40 marks	£672 13 4		
The Vicarage there .. .. .	12 marks	200 0 0		
Carrick .. .. .	2 marks	33 6 8		
Rathconil.. .. .	20 marks	336 6 8		
The Vicarage there .. .. .	100s.	125 0 0		
Moylisker .. .. .	2 marks	33 6 8		
Castlelost .. .. .	5 marks	83 6 8		
Portleman .. .. .	£4 3 4	103 3 4		
Portnashangan .. .. .	6 marks	100 0 0		
The Vicarage there .. .. .	1 mark	16 13 4		
Taughmon .. .. .	8 marks	133 6 8		
Lynne .. .. .	6 marks	100 0 0		
Church Aula Lapidæ (Stonehall) .. .. .	5 marks	83 6 8		
Clonarvyn .. .. .	4 marks	66 13 4		
Lynne .. .. .	40s.	50 0 0		
Tristelbale .. .. .	Nothing, because it does not suffice for burdens.			
Mestay .. .. .	40s.	£50 0 0		
Temporalities of the house of Saint				
Mary de Trim there .. .. .	5 marks	83 6 8		
Fogram .. .. .	4s.	5 0 0		
Delvin .. .. .	12 marks	200 0 0		
The Vicarage there .. .. .	6 marks	100 0 0		
Kilbride Pilat .. .. .	30s.	37 10 0		
Multifarnham .. .. .	100s.	125 0 0		
Killoilach .. .. .	100s.	125 0 0		
Kilbride Veston .. .. .	40s.	50 0 0		
Drumcree.. .. .	13 marks 3s.	220 8 4		
Clonfadforan .. .. .	14s.	17 10 0		
Lene .. .. .	9 marks	150 0 0		
De Scafarnan .. .. .	40s.	50 0 0		
Temporalities of God's House of				
Mullingar .. .. .	£8 18 8	223 6 8		
Temporalities of the Nuns of Lois-				
mullen at Ballincolan .. .. .	106s. 2d.	132 14 2		

It will be noted that the parish of Lynn is twice mentioned. Probably on the second occasion it is the vicarage that is meant.

We may take these as fair examples of what all these returns are like. In some deaneries the parishes were on a average poorer—this was especially the case in Westmeath—in others they were as good, and occasionally better. We see, therefore, that already there was great disparity of incomes. Some of the clergy were well paid, while others must have been in the direst poverty. The Rector of Kells had what would be equivalent to £2,000 a year of our money ; the Rectors of Trim and Galtrim had over £1,000 ; but in some of the poorer parishes the incomes would not be worth more than five or six pounds, and sometimes even less. Then it will be noticed how much of the church property was appropriated by the religious orders. In every case where a vicarage is mentioned in the Taxation, it means that the rectory was in the possession of one of the abbeys, and it will be seen that the incomes of the vicars, even in the most advanced parts of the diocese, were scanty indeed.

It does not appear from these returns, but it is abundantly evident from other sources, that pluralities and non-residence prevailed to an incredible extent. The incomes of the richer parishes were frequently used to reward men for political services, or to provide for the younger members of powerful families ; and these good men considered that they had done all that was required of them when they drew the salary, and paid a curate to perform the duty. Sometimes, too, foreigners, recommended by the Pope, and Court favourites recommended by the King, were appointed to these livings. In such cases the idea of residence was never entertained, and even the provision of a curate was not always made.

A few examples will illustrate this better than any words of explanation. We have in 1247, Walter de



Sancto Severo, obtaining a dispensation for holding the rectory of Marturin (Martry) in the diocese of Meath, while at the same time he held a canonry in the cathedral of Exeter. His successor in Martry was another foreigner, Matthew de Salerno, who was at the same time papal sub-deacon and chaplain.<sup>7</sup> In 1283 the King, Edward I., wanted to make some provision for his queen's cousin, James of Spain. The Bishopric of Meath happened to be vacant at the time, and, therefore, the vacant parishes fell to the King's gift, and he bestowed the living of Skryne on his needy relative.<sup>8</sup> In 1292 we have William de Clera appointed to Galtrim, though he already held two other parishes, one in York and the other in Cork. In 1398 there was a contest as to the Arch-deaconry of Meath. The Pope wished John Prene to be appointed, but he was opposed by Thomas Bathe, who prevented the Pope's mandate from taking effect. Incidentally we learn that Prene was Canon of Howth in Dublin, and of St. Margaret's in Lincoln; he had also a parish in York, and another in Canterbury, was a papal chaplain, and was litigating about the Deanery of Dublin, which was afterwards awarded to him.<sup>9</sup> These are but a few instances which reveal to us the state of ecclesiastical affairs at the time.

In some cases the incumbents so appointed did not deem it necessary to take Holy Orders. We have already seen how Thomas Saint Leger, Archdeacon of Kells, was elected Bishop of Meath, and was then for the first time ordained. We have another instance in 1289, when Nicholas de Clera obtained the Pope's "indult" to hold certain livings without being ordained. In Meath he was rector of Loughsuedy,

<sup>7</sup> *Vatican Records.*

<sup>8</sup> *State Papers.*

<sup>9</sup> *Vatican Records.*

but he held besides the parish of Rathangan in Kildare, and Youghal in Cork. He was also Archdeacon of Dublin and Canon of Derry. Probably he was some relation to the William de Clera mentioned above, who was Rector of Galtrim. Of course when a man not in orders was appointed to a parish he must have deputed some one to do his duty, but cases like these, and there were many such, show us how often the church funds were misappropriated. The underpaid clergy who did the work and endured the hardship, were, probably, most of them, of the Irish nation. It cannot have made them think favourably of the English when they contrasted their own hard lot with that of the Norman grandees, who appropriated the money, and left others to do the work of the Church.

Giraldus Cambrensis tells us that whatever may have been the other faults of the Irish clergy, in the matter of morality their conduct was beyond reproach.<sup>10</sup> The same can scarcely be said of their Norman successors. The Records of the Vatican throw a strange light on this subject, and show that a large proportion of these clergy were illegitimates. Such was the case with the Bishop of Clonmacnoise in 1352, and with the Archdeacon of Meath in 1238. In latter years it became still more common. In 1400 the rector of Kilbeggan resigned, and we learn that both he and his successor were illegitimate. In 1401 we have the rector of Moyvore succeeded in the same parish by his illegitimate son. In the same year we have a faculty issued to the Bishop of Meath authorizing him to ordain ten persons of this class. And all along it is the same story—not so bad in Meath, perhaps, as in some other places, but bad enough to make us suspect that this must have been a recognized means of

<sup>10</sup> *Topography of Ireland*, chap. xxvii.

providing for the "left-handed" members of the Norman families.

Another wide-spread abuse was the appointment of mere boys to some of the vacant livings. We have an example of this in 1400, when the Pope issued his mandate to the Bishop of Clonmacnoise, ordering him to collate John Onniyl to the parish of Lemanaghan. This youth was "the son of a priest religious and an unmarried woman," and was in his fifteenth year. He is, however, to be promoted "to all even holy orders, and hold a benefice, even with cure, if found fit in Latin."<sup>11</sup> Another example is the case of John de Burgo, alias Ethenardi, who "entered the order of friar preachers before his fourteenth year, and before that age, they caused him to be promoted to all the minor orders, and after attaining his fourteenth year, to the diaconate." He was then ordained priest, and became vicar of Dunboyne. Again, in 1402, a dispensation is granted to John Flemmyng, son of Thomas, Baron of Slane," to hold any benefice with cure, even a major dignity, he being in his nineteenth year." It often happened, however, that when a parish fell vacant, no one at all was appointed, and the income was applied to other purposes. Thus, in 1244, licence for a year was granted to the Archbishop of Armagh "to use for the payment of the debts of that church the proceeds of those churches in the dioceses of Armagh, Meath, and Down, which had been void for two years."

In the account quoted above of the taxation of the deanery of Duleek, we cannot help being struck with the large number of the churches which are enumerated, and the same thing would hold with regard to nearly all the other deaneries. This does not mean that they ministered to a larger population than that which we

<sup>11</sup> *Vatican Records.*



have at present, but simply that the edifices were for the most part small, and the congregations scanty. If we take notice of the ruins which are so thickly scattered through the diocese, we see at once that this must have been the case. Not only are the churches very small in themselves, but wherever the chancel arch can still be traced it will be seen that the chancel occupies fully half the church, and that the space available for a congregation is so restricted that even a moderately large assembly would be an impossibility. It was in churches such as these that the poorer clergy ministered. The contrast must have been great indeed between the church service as rendered with such surroundings and the same service as it would be rendered in one of the fine abbey churches. The contrast is exemplified in a remarkable way on the banks of the Boyne, near Trim. On the one side stands the magnificent pile of Bective Abbey, grand even in its decay, while within view, on the other side of the river, is the little church at Trubly, mean in its architecture, and of a size that would scarcely accommodate twenty people, from whom all view of the altar must have been cut off by the stone wall, with only a narrow opening, which separated the chancel from the nave. The truth is that the churches were altogether sacrificed to the abbeys. Anything seems to have been considered good enough for the ordinary parish church, while the abbeys were enriched at their expense. In many cases the monasteries charged themselves with providing for the duty in the outlying parishes. How meanly they fulfilled this obligation is shown by the small payments they made to their vicars. It was shown none the less by the poor and unpretentious buildings which were considered good enough for the ordinary sanctuaries of the country.

## CHAPTER X.

### INCIDENTS OF THE ANGLO-NORMAN PERIOD.

BEYOND the account of the founding of the several monasteries, and a few personal details respecting the successive bishops, the materials available for the history of the Diocese of Meath in that period which extends from the coming of the English to the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII. are very scanty. We cannot, therefore, attempt a consecutive narrative, but must content ourselves with relating a few unconnected incidents which illustrate the condition of the church at that time.

We know that the power of excommunication was a weapon largely used in the period which we are now considering. In its severest forms it became an interdict, and in that case the inhabitants of a whole district were placed under the ban, and were deprived of all ministrations of the church. I have not been able to find any incident connected with the diocese of Meath which deals with the infliction of an interdict, from which we may, perhaps, conclude that it was spared from such a drastic punishment. We have, however, a case in the year 1222, in which the bishop of Meath was commissioned to interfere in the affairs of the Diocese of Cashel, and to relax the sentence of interdict which had been imposed there by the archbishop. We learn from this what a tremendous and practically irresponsible power was assumed by the churchmen in those days. It was decided by the Pope,

to whom the King of England had complained, that the archbishop's action was without reasonable cause, and that prelate was commanded to relax the interdict within fifteen days ; but it had continued in force all the time which had been occupied, first of all in making complaint to the King, and then in sending a messenger to Rome and waiting for his return. So that, admittedly without sufficient cause, the whole community in a particular district could be deprived of the ordinances of religion for a long time, and without any redress.<sup>1</sup> It is doubtful, however, whether interdicts were always as terrible in reality as they were in intention. Even when the Pope himself decreed the judgment, means were found of evading the command ; we may, therefore, hope that in this case the archbishop did not have it all his own way. Few of the religious orders were under episcopal control. The regular clergy, therefore, would probably ignore the interdict, and even the seculars would not in all cases interpret the decree too literally.

The excommunication of individuals, as it was less serious in its consequences than an interdict, was more frequently exercised. It is not to be expected that many instances would be placed on record. State Papers, which are our chief source of information, do not concern themselves with cases of undistinguished individuals ; it is only by inference, therefore, that we conclude that this mode of punishment was often employed. There is one case connected with the Diocese of Meath, which is given in some detail, and which illustrates how excommunication came to be mixed up with the most ordinary disputes, and also shows us that it was a two-edged kind of weapon, that could be employed by both parties in the quarrel.

<sup>1</sup> London Record Office.



The contention took place about the year 1280, and continued for some years afterwards. It was about "one and a half carucates of land in Ardmym and Ballygodan," said to belong to the church of Kells, but claimed by the abbot of Saint Mary's near that town. A carucate consisted of about one hundred and twenty acres. The Archbishop of Armagh took the part of the abbey, and because the rector would not submit to his ruling, he excommunicated John de Kenley, Archdeacon of Meath and Rector of Kells, Thomas Saint Leger, Archdeacon of Kells, and William Barbedor, and Henry of Oxford, their officials. They not only ignored this ecclesiastical sentence against them, but retaliated in a similar way by excommunicating the abbot. The excommunicated person was not only debarred from all religious privileges, but was placed under what we would now call a strict "boycott," no one being allowed to have any dealings with him. Accordingly we have the archdeacon and his friends, after two years, issuing a manifesto in which they "warn the faithful more strictly to avoid Maurice, who bears himself as abbot of Saint Mary's, near Kells, and whom they had excommunicated two years previously." This was answered by a counter-manifesto from the archbishop, which states that all of them had been excommunicated by him three years before, and that, therefore, their sentence against the abbot Maurice was invalid. And so things went on, until in the end they had to appeal to the secular arm, and brought the matter before the King; and this is how it happens that we have a record of the whole transaction preserved. We are not told what eventually was the verdict, but as the property in question belonged, in Bishop Ussher's time, to the Archdeacon of Meath and Rector of Kells, we may conclude that the

case went against abbot Maurice.<sup>2</sup> He afterwards (in 1278) became bishop of Kilmore.

The Archbishop, Nicholas MacMolissa, who took such an active part in this dispute, was himself excommunicated by the Pope's delegates shortly afterwards.<sup>3</sup> It does not appear on what grounds this was done, but Nicholas—notwithstanding that Ware says of him that he was eminent for his prudence—was one who loved to mix himself up in quarrels, and made many enemies for himself. Whatever may have been the cause, he very calmly ignored the sentence against him, and, as we have seen in the matter of the election of Thomas Saint Leger to the See of Meath, defied both King and Pope. A more serious case was that of one of his successors, Roland de Jorse, who was excommunicated in 1316, but here again the Archbishop defied the Pope, and went on as if no sentence had been pronounced against him. After five years contumacy, the bishop of Meath with two others was deputed to bring him to trial, and in the meantime to take charge of his diocese. The accusations brought against him were that, notwithstanding his excommunication he had appointed Gelasius to be bishop of Clogher; that he had refused to publish the processes by Cardinals Gaucelin and Luke against Robert Bruce; that he had absolved a nobleman named Columba, an adherent of Robert; that he had given the church of Termonfechin to Robert de Cosgrave when it was appropriate to Saint Mary's, Louth. It is also said of him that he had beaten two priests, and that he had pawned an image of Saint Michael, a holy water vessel, an aspersion, an incense boat, a thurible, and many silver chalices; there were further charges of bloodshed, incest, and

<sup>2</sup> *State Papers.*

<sup>3</sup> Harris's *Ware*.

adultery ; and that he had taken a bribe of forty shillings from a nobleman, "to remove the land from an interdict, which had been inflicted on account of his having put away his wife, to live in adultery with another woman, which the archbishop still permits." <sup>4</sup> We are not told whether these terrible charges were proved against him, but as he resigned his See somewhere about this time, it would seem that they were not all of them without foundation.

Returning to Archbishop Nicholas, we find him in 1289 engaged in a controversy with the Bishop of Meath as to the method of dealing with those who, within the diocese, were accused of notorious excesses. The Archbishop maintained that they should be dealt with privately, but the bishop, relying probably on the rules laid down by Bishop Simon Rochford at the Synod of Trim, held that the enquiry should be made publicly before the clergy of each deanery. This matter was referred to the Pope, who gave judgment against the Bishop of Meath, and replied that, according to the statute of Innocent IV., the Archbishop could punish notorious crimes without examination.<sup>5</sup>

Men of the stamp of Archbishop Nicholas, however they may defy authority themselves, are generally very strict in imposing it upon others. We are not, therefore, surprised to find that he was a great champion of the rights and prerogatives of the Church, especially against all lay interference. In 1291 he founded an association by which the clergy banded themselves together to resist all lay encroachments. The meeting was held in the Dominican Convent of Trim, and, therefore, comes naturally into our history of the Diocese of Meath. A copy of the original document drawn up at the time was transcribed by Primate

<sup>4</sup> *Vatican Records.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



Swayne (1417-1439) in his Register, and is preserved in the Library of Armagh. It is printed in the Appendix to King's *History of the Church of Ireland*. The following is a summary of that document, given in Harris's *Ware* :

He brought in the other three archbishops, all their suffragans, all the deans and chapters, and several other degrees and orders of clergy, into his scheme, and they unanimously engaged to promote and stand by their confederacy, not only under their hands and seals, but they added to it the sanction of an oath.

1st.—They swore that if they, or any of them, their churches, rights, jurisdictions, liberties, or customs, should by any lay power or jurisdiction whatsoever be impeded, resisted, or grieved, that they would, at their common expense, in proportion to their respective incomes, support, maintain, and defend each other, in all courts, and before all judges, either ecclesiastical or secular.

2dly.—If any of their messengers, proctors, or the executors of their orders, should suffer any loss or damage in the execution of their business, by any lay power or jurisdiction, that in such case they would amply and without delay make up to them all such losses and damages, out of their own fortunes, according to a rateable proportion of their revenues.

3rdly.—If any ordinary should pronounce sentence of excommunication against a delinquent, that all the other bishops should promulge and with effect prosecute such sentence in their respective dioceses ; so that if a person excommunicated in one place should fly to another, the place he continued in should be put under an interdict, as also wherever he had his habitation or the greater part of his fortune. Provided notice shall be given by the bishop publishing such sentence.

4thly.—If any of the archbishops should prove cool or negligent in the execution of the said agreement, then they bound themselves by virtue of the oath they had taken in five hundred marks to the Pope, and as many to their brethren who should observe it, who should keep up to the terms prescribed.

And, lastly, they agreed that if any archbishop, bishop, etc., absent at the time of the agreement, should upon request,

refuse to comply with the terms stipulated, then they engaged and promised to complain of him to the Pope, and to prosecute such complaint with effect at their common charges, and not only so, but that they would not afford him any aid, counsel, or assistance in any other affair relating to him or his church.

We are not told what was the occasion of this remarkable association, but sufficient explanation is afforded by the fact that the times were unsettled and lawless, and that we have frequent instances of "encroachments" which would have rendered such a confederation eminently advisable. Thus we have, in 1289, a bishop elect of Cloyne who was blinded by some "sons of perdition," his enemies; and in the same year we read of both clerks and laymen in the province of Dublin who were excommunicated for taking part in "burning churches, towns, and other places, and in public robberies."<sup>6</sup> Nor were the difficulties of the time merely due to the lawlessness of private individuals. In 1290 we have the Bishop of Meath complaining to the King that some of the King's ministers in Ireland had caused it to be publicly prohibited that laymen should appear when summoned before their ordinaries at the usual inquisitions.<sup>7</sup> According to Olden the immediate occasion of the meeting was the oppressiveness of the tax of one tenth of their income levied on the clergy at this time by the Pope and King, but if so, they would have scarcely laid such stress on the dangers arising from "lay" encroachments, nor would they have enacted that fines in certain cases should be paid to the Pope. On the other hand, it is to be remembered that if the laymen of this age were aggressive, the same is equally true of the ecclesiastics. This very Archbishop Nicholas in 1285 defied the royal prerogative, and seized the

<sup>6</sup> *Vatican Records.*

<sup>7</sup> *State Papers.*

temporalities of the Diocese of Dromore when that See had become vacant. True to the traditions of his country, he was always against the government, and neglected no opportunity of putting obstacles in the way of the administration of English rule.

These interferences of the Archbishop with the Diocese of Meath were due to the fact that Meath was in his province. In the earlier years the bishops of Meath had endeavoured to assert their independence. In 1227 Bishop Hugh de Taghmon had a suit at the court of Rome, which lasted a long time, and was very expensive. He claimed exemption from the visitation of the Primate, but without success. The controversy still went on, however, until 1262, when a synod was held at Drogheda, and it was there agreed, "that it should be lawful for the Archbishop of Armagh, and his successors, without any offence, to visit the bishop and clergy of Meath, and their successors." From that time the right seems to have been exercised without any serious question.

Bishops in those days were very great magnates, and with what high-handed measures they could act is shown by several incidents. Bishop Richard de la Corner was not the kind of man that we would expect to be particularly aggressive. In some ways he was remarkably conscientious, for in 1235, three years after his appointment as Bishop of Meath, he made petition to the Pope to be relived of the office, because "he had it on his conscience that when a simple clerk he consented to the death of a malefactor."<sup>8</sup> His scruples in this case were overcome, for he continued until his death in 1250 in possession of the See. We would not have imagined that he was capable of such action as that with which he is charged in 1245, for in

<sup>8</sup> *Vatican Records.*



that year he is accused of having "seized in her castle of Clonard, Isabella de Beaufo, when *non compos mentis*, carried her away at night, detained her in his custody, dispossessed her of her castle, and placed his own bailiffs there." <sup>9</sup> This incident gives us some idea of what tremendous power the bishops then possessed, and how they united the position of great feudal lords with the more spiritual jurisdiction that belonged of right to their office.

We have another instance of high-handed action in the report of a lawsuit touching the advowson of the parish of Galtrim, which was heard in the year 1289. It appears that Hugh of Galtrim was patron of the living, and William de la Corner (of the same family as the bishop just mentioned) was rector. William was raised to the episcopate (it does not appear for what diocese), and the parish thus becoming vacant, Walter Hosee, Hugh's uncle, appointed Philip le Norman to the vacant benefice. But this Walter had some time previously been excommunicated for a crime which he had committed, and as the price of absolution it was proposed that this church should be given over into the bishop's hands. The negotiations were, however, unduly prolonged, and in the meantime Walter was killed at Fytherath. The bishop was not to be balked of his purpose, and so he refused to allow the dead man to be buried until Lucy, wife of Walter Hosee, had given up the keys of his coffers. Then, searching in the coffers, he found Walter's seal, drew up a deed touching the advowson, and put the seal to it. He followed this up by ejecting the newly appointed parson out of his church. In the end, however, he failed in his design, for the jury which tried the case gave a verdict against him, and awarded fifty marks

<sup>9</sup> *Vatican Records*.

damages to the aggrieved patron.<sup>10</sup> The advowson of the parish remained in the Hussey family up to the time of Disestablishment.

Contentions like this about patronage and church appointments are frequent at this time. A couple of examples may be given. The Rectory of Kells, which carried with it the Archdeaconry of Meath, was one of the most lucrative offices in the Irish Church, and naturally was a position eagerly sought after. Not only was there a large income, but there were also extensive lands on which crops of corn used to be raised and exported to England.<sup>11</sup> The Pope was always on the watch for opportunities of giving positions such as this to some priest—generally an Italian—for whom he wished to make provision, and in this case he bestowed the dignity on Hugh, Cardinal of Saint Mary's in Porticu. But the authorities at home had made another appointment, and their nominee, Matthew Crumpe, held possession and kept out the cardinal. A long litigation ensued, which was terminated by an "amicable concord," according to which Crumpe was to hold the offices, but was to pay out of the revenue a yearly pension to the cardinal. Whether Crumpe really promised this it is impossible to say, but it is quite certain that he never performed it, and so, in 1372, the Pope appealed to the King of England for help, because "Matthew Crumpe of Ireland had set at nought the amicable concord which he swore to observe, and refused to give up the archdeaconry, or to restore the fruits received." Appeals of this kind were never received with much favour in England, and it is probable that the King took no

<sup>10</sup> *Vatican Records*.

<sup>11</sup> *State Papers*: Licence for three years to John de Roche Archdeacon of Meath to export his corn by land and sea in England for trading purposes. Not to be exported to the King's enemies in Wales, March 3, 1282-3.

action—at all events, if he did so, his efforts were not more efficacious than were those of His Holiness. The year following, 1373, the Pope appealed to the Bishop of Meath, and commanded him to “make order in the cause between Matthew Crompt and Hugh, Cardinal of Saint Mary’s in Porticu, about the Archdeaconry of Meath, concerning which divers sentences have been given in behalf of the cardinal in the papal palace, but have not been executed, nor can the cardinal, by reason of the distance, the dangers of the roads, and the wars which have raged in those parts, conveniently govern the said archdeaconry, either by himself or by another. Matthew is to be put in possession of the archdeaconry, and is to pay the cardinal from his revenues, under penalties, through the papal camera. On Matthew’s death, the cardinal’s pension is to be paid by his successor.” Twenty years later, the situation remained, in many respects, unchanged. The Pope still claimed the right of presentation to the archdeaconry, and his claims were still set at nought by the local parties. But all the actors in the original cause had passed away. On the death of the Pope, Gregory IX., Hugh, the Cardinal, had given his adhesion to the anti-pope Clement VII., so he was deposed, and Urban VI. appointed Lewis, Cardinal Deacon of New Saint Mary’s to the Archdeaconry. Lewis, however, died without having possession, and the provision was then transferred to Landulph, Cardinal Deacon of Saint Nicholas in Carcere Tulliano. Crumpe also was dead, but his successor, “Thomas Sprott, clerk, of London,” followed in his steps, and opposed the provision, and like him, successfully, so that none of the income ever found its way into the pockets of the Italian cardinals.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Vatican Records.*



As another example of the disputes which arose concerning appointments we may take the case of Killallon, which came to an end in 1398. This was not as great a prize as the archdeaconry, so there was less temptation to bestow it on a foreigner. As a matter of fact the Pope bestowed it on a native, John O'Carroll, whose name the Italian scribe spells Okkarwill. But once again the Pope's right was contested, and when O'Carroll went to take possession of the parish, he found another in occupation, one John Asserby, "priest of the Diocese of Meath." A lawsuit at Rome ensued, in which the cause "was heard in the apostolic palace by divers auditors, who adjudged the church to Okkarwill." Before this sentence was pronounced, however, Asserby resigned; probably he could no longer bear the expense of prosecuting his cause at Rome. But this only made matters worse for O'Carroll, for a new rival now appeared in the person of Thomas de Everdon, Dean of Saint Patrick's, Dublin. The decree was altered, and "the Pope ordered the sentence to be carried out against Everdon and any other intruders." Armed with this document, O'Carroll again assayed to take possession, and actually held the parish for thirty days, but after that "Everdon despoiled him, and had him imprisoned for about six years." We are not told how this was accomplished, but it was doubtless under the Statute of Provisors, first passed in 1351, and re-enacted in 1390, which enacted that all persons receiving papal provisions should be liable to imprisonment, and that all the preferments to which the Pope nominated should be forfeit for that turn to the King.<sup>13</sup> When O'Carroll got out of prison, he once more took possession of the parish, and held it for about fifteen months, but

<sup>13</sup> Stubb's *Constitutional History of England*, chap. xix.

Everdon "again despoiled him, and had him again imprisoned; and when with great labour and expense he got free, and was re-inducted, Everdon obtained royal writs to have him arrested and imprisoned, as well as any executors of the above processes, and again despoiled him." In the end, O'Carroll reaped the reward of his pertinacity, for Everdon retired from the contest, and left him in possession of his parish.<sup>14</sup>

We learn from these two examples that the interference of the Pope in the affairs of the Church of Ireland did not always pass without protest. This is further exemplified by an event which happened in the year 1400. This time it was in connection with the Parish of Castlerickard. The rector was John Tathe, an Englishman, and because he "did not well understand and intelligibly speak the language of the majority of the parishioners," the Pope deposed him. We would have more admiration for this action of His Holiness if he had not appointed in his stead Donald Magluay, who was already Rector of Rathwire (Killucan), and who was to hold the two parishes simultaneously. Donald soon found that it was easier to obtain a papal provision than it was to secure actual possession of the parish, and so we have him complaining that "impetrators of papal graces are often molested with banishment, imprisonment, &c., under a Statute of Provisors." The Pope in this case "commands the Abbot of Kilbeggan and the Dean of Clonmacnoise to help Donald. They are to compel molesters and rebels by ecclesiastical censure, invoking, if necessary, the aid of the secular arm. The Pope by these presents, which are to hold good for ten years, exempts Donald from the jurisdiction of the Bishop

<sup>14</sup> *Vatican Records.*

of Meath, and any other ordinaries.”<sup>15</sup> This last sentence is interesting, showing, as it does, that the bishop was not on the Pope’s side in this matter, but that he upheld the right of the Church of Ireland to be free from foreign interference. It may be added that in the following year (1401) Donald Magluay was appointed to the parish of Loughsuedy, getting the Pope’s permission to hold it along with his two other livings of Rathwire and Castlerickard.

<sup>15</sup> *Vatican Records.*



## CHAPTER XI.

### SUCCESSION OF BISHOPS.

WE have already traced the succession of Bishops of Meath (Chapter VII.) down to the episcopate of John O'Carroll, who was appointed in 1321, and was translated to the Archdiocese of Cashel, in 1327. It may be convenient here to continue the list down to the time of Henry VIII., giving such few biographical details as are available, our information being mostly derived from Ware's monumental work, as edited and enlarged by Harris.

O'Carroll was succeeded in the Diocese of Meath by William de Paul, who was a Yorkshire man, educated at Oxford and Paris. He became a Carmelite friar, and in 1324 was elected provincial of that order, "on the score of his singular piety, wisdom, and dexterity in the management of affairs." He obtained the See by papal provision, and was consecrated at Avignon, where the Pope at that time held his court. He continued to be Bishop of Meath until his death, which took place in 1349.

On the See becoming vacant, a synod of the clergy was called together, and the Archdeacon of Meath, and Rector of Kells, William Saint Leger, was elected. Though holding such important offices, he was as yet only in deacon's orders.<sup>1</sup> Curiously enough, a predecessor of his, of the same name, and also an archdeacon, was elected before he had taken orders at all.

<sup>1</sup> *Papal Letters.*

The election being completed, an appeal was made to the Pope to confirm it. This, however, would be to acknowledge the right of the clergy to elect, and that the Pope would not do. So Clement VI. annulled the election,<sup>2</sup> but at the same time pleased the electors by issuing a provisory bull in favour of their nominee, sending "concurrent letters to the clergy and people of the city and diocese, to the vassals of the Church, to the Archbishop of Armagh, and to King Edward." He had but a short episcopate, as he died two years later.

Nicholas Allen, who had been abbot of the monastery of Saint Thomas the Martyr, Dublin, succeeded. Like his predecessor, he was elected by the clergy, but again the Pope annulled the election. At the same time, he gave him the usual "provision," appointing him to the See. He was consecrated by Peter, Bishop of Palestrina, and some time after his consecration, the Pope issued a mandate, ordering him to betake himself to his See,<sup>3</sup> from which perhaps we may conclude that he was somewhat dilatory in taking up the duties of his episcopate. He also held the office of Lord High Treasurer of Ireland.

Just about this time Ireland, in common with the whole west of Europe was visited with a series of pestilences, the most serious of which was that known by the expressive name of Black Death. It made its first appearance near Dublin, in the year 1348, and there were further visitations in 1361 and 1370. We are told that the "pestilence deprived of human inhabitants villages and cities, castles and towns, so that there was scarcely found a man to dwell therein; the pestilence was so contagious, that whosoever touched the sick or the

<sup>2</sup> *Papal Letters.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

dead was immediately affected and died, and the penitent and the confessor were carried together to the grave.”<sup>4</sup> In connection with this, we have a curious document which was presented to the Pope in the year 1363. It sets forth that “whereas by reason of pestilence and wars in those parts, there is a great lack of clerks, and the value of benefices is small, the Pope is prayed to expedite the petitions for the under-written persons, inasmuch as this is the first roll he has received from them, and he must not be surprised that the persons have no scholastic degrees, inasmuch as in Ireland there is no university or place of study ; nevertheless, the persons are not afraid of being rejected on examination, and the Pope is informed that the churches of Ireland are not otherwise burdened by papal provisions, especially as the petitioners are from the ends of the earth.”<sup>5</sup> There are nineteen signatures to this extraordinary document, three of which are from the Diocese of Meath. Thomas Feogy asks for a benefice in the gift of the Bishop of Meath, value eighty gold florins with cure of souls, or forty without ; Walter Valysch makes a similar request ; and Nicholas Venderal, a poor clerk of the Diocese of Meath, asks for a benefice in the gift of the Archbishop and Chapter of Dublin, value eighty gold florins. The willingness of the petitioners to accept an income of forty gold florins, provided there were no duties attached to it, is refreshing in its naive simplicity. The Pope granted the petition, but we have no means of knowing whether the Bishop of Meath was equally complaisant.

Nicholas Allen died in 1366. His successor was not appointed until 1369. In that year the Pope translated

<sup>4</sup> *Friar Clyn*, quoted in Haverty's *History of Ireland*.

<sup>5</sup> *Papal Records*—Petitions.



Stephen de Valle from the See of Limerick to that of Meath. He was much more of a statesman than a bishop, and held several important offices under the Crown. Like his predecessor he was Lord High Treasurer of Ireland, to which he was appointed while still Bishop of Limerick. In 1373 he was deputed, with others, by the Irish Parliament, to proceed to England, and inform the King concerning the affairs of Ireland. "Their remonstrances had so much weight that the Earl of March was ordered to repair there as soon as possible, and in the meantime Sir William Windsor was appointed custos." <sup>6</sup> In 1376 De Valle was appointed governor or overseer of Munster, and about the same time was made collector of the customs in the port of Galway. On the death of John of Hastings, Earl of Pembroke, and minority of his heir, he was given the custody of all his estate, and to be serjeant of his castles. With multifarious duties such as these, it was scarcely to be expected that he could give much time to the care of his diocese. The only ecclesiastical event of his episcopate that there is to relate is that a "relaxation of one hundred days of enjoined penance was granted to penitents who on the principal feasts of the year visited the church of Saint Mary, Kildalkey." These indulgences were beginning to be a recognized method of raising funds just at this time. Stephen de Valle died at Oxford, in 1379, and was buried there in the monastery of the Predicants.

The next bishop in succession was William Andrew, who had already held the See of Aghadoe, and was translated to Meath in 1380 by provision of the Pope, the King at the same time confirming the appointment. Ware tells us that "he was reputed a prelate of great wisdom and learning, yet, after the manner of Socrates,

<sup>6</sup> Harris's *Ware*.

he would never publish any of his writings, although great matters were expected of him." The doctrines of Wycliff were at this time exercising the minds of men in the Church of England, and it is interesting to find that they reached Ireland also. Henry Crumpe, a Cistercian monk of Baltinglass, first comes into notice for having, in his sermons at Oxford, attacked the mendicant orders. He argued that they were never instituted by God's inspiration, and that they were directly contrary to the decrees of the General Council of Lateran, which prohibited the bringing in of any more new religious orders into the church. For this teaching he was brought before the Archbishop of Canterbury, and having been forced to "deny and abjure these assertions," he was silenced, "that he should not exercise publicly any act in the schools, either by reading, preaching, disputing, or determining, until he should have a special licence from the said Archbishop to do so." <sup>7</sup> We next find him in Ireland, engaged in controversy with Bishop William Andrew, of Meath. This time the subject was the Real Presence in the Sacrament. Crumpe argued that "the Body of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar was only a looking glass to the Body of Christ in heaven." <sup>8</sup> The bishop denounced such teaching as heresy, but there the record stops, leaving us, as is so often the case, just at the point where we would have liked more information. Crumpe, however, was not silenced, for in 1401 we have him preaching against the indulgence granted by the Pope to those who "visited on the Feast of the Annunciation the House of the Friars Preachers, Drogheda, and the Chapel of Saint Mary, the Mother of God, almost contiguous."

<sup>7</sup> Ussher, *Religion Professed by the Ancient Irish*, chap. vi.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. v.

The next bishop was Alexander Petit, called also Alexander de Balscot, from the place of his birth in Oxfordshire. He was translated from Ossory by papal provision in 1386. He held the office of Lord High Treasurer of Ireland, and afterwards became Chancellor and Lord Justice. A letter from King Richard II., addressed to this prelate in 1388, throws some light on the disturbed state of English politics at the time. In this letter the king rebukes the bishop for using the seal of Robert de Vere, late Duke of Ireland, to whom the King had granted the dominion and government of Ireland, and for advancing the Duke Robert's standard and pennons against the rebels and enemies, after he had knowledge of the duke's attainder, and forfeiture of all his estates and dominions, by act of parliament. Richard, therefore, commands him to lay aside the duke's seal and standard, and to use those of the King only.<sup>9</sup> It will be remembered that Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, had been one of the King's favourites, and Richard had by patent created him first Marquis of Dublin, and afterwards Duke of Ireland—a title which in Ireland he never assumed. There was also granted to him and his heirs the entire dominion of Ireland, to be held of the crown by liege-homage. Such partiality on the part of the monarch produced intense irritation amongst the nobles of England, and consequently, in the Parliament which met in 1388, a series of charges were brought against De Vere and his companions, one of which was that they had attempted to make Robert de Vere King of Ireland. Sentence was given against them, and it was in consequence of that sentence that the letter to the bishop was written.

<sup>9</sup> Harris's *Ware*.



When Alexander Petit died, in 1400, King Henry IV., newly come to the throne, wished to secure the appointment for his confessor, Robert Mascal, a Carmelite friar, and while the election was pending, granted to him the custody of the temporalities. He was, however, unsuccessful in his efforts, for the Pope appointed Robert Mountain, Rector of Kildalkey, allowing him at the same time to retain his parish along with the bishopric. He sat for ten years, until his death in 1412.

He was succeeded in 1413 by Edward Dantsey, who had been Archdeacon of Cornwall. Like so many of his predecessors, he held the office of Lord High Treasurer of Ireland, and in 1414 a commission was issued to him authorizing him to treat with the Irish enemies and English rebels, to take hostages and grant protections, and to do everything for the public peace. Shortly afterwards he was raised to a still more important position, being appointed deputy to the Earl of March and Ulster, Governor of Ireland. As the earl was absent, this practically put the whole rule of the country in his hands. Much resentment was, therefore, caused by his elevation. He was a stranger to the country, and of inferior rank to those lords, who considered themselves slighted by his being placed over them. When he went to take his place at the Privy Council, they raised objection, and when they found that his commission was sealed only by the Earl of March, they demanded that he should obtain a commission under the great seal either of England or Ireland. The Archbishop of Dublin, who was chancellor at the time, refused to administer the oaths, and a somewhat acrimonious debate ensued. In the end the Council consented to receive the deputy, with an express declaration "that they received him, not

from any conviction of the legality of his commission, but from the necessity of public affairs, and to prevent that damage and distress which might arise from a suspension of government.”<sup>10</sup> He summoned a parliament in 1423, but was shortly afterwards superseded in his office of deputy by the Earl of Ormond. A curious episode of his episcopate was the charge brought against him in 1426 of having stolen a cup, value thirteen shillings and four pence, out of the church of Tara. “The indictment was removed into parliament, and the bishop in his place stood up, and made protestation that he did not intend by any answer of his to violate the privileges of the church, but only to manifest his innocence, by declaring that he was not guilty of the felony whereof he was accused. On the 10th September, 1427, he appeared before the Archbishop of Armagh, and was cleared. On the 3rd of December following, John Pentony, Esquire, made open confession to the bishop that he was guilty, and submitted himself to the bishop’s mercy, who was good natured enough to forgive him, and turned him over to the archbishop for absolution.”<sup>11</sup>

Bishop Dantsey died in 1429, and shortly afterwards the clergy of Meath met and elected Thomas Scurlog, Prior of Saint Peter’s, Newtown, to the vacant See, As he was already Lord High Treasurer, it is probable that he was the candidate favoured by the King. It would seem, however, that he failed to secure the support of the authorities at Rome. Either he was never consecrated, or he survived his consecration for a very short time. Thereupon the Pope, by provision, appointed William Hadsor—an appointment that was bitterly opposed by the Archbishop of Armagh. He only held the See for four years, and died in 1434.

<sup>10</sup> Leland, *History of Ireland*, Book iii., chap. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Harris’s *Ware*.

William Silk or Sill succeeded, having obtained commendatory letters to the Archbishop of Armagh from the "General Council of Basil." This Council sat from 1431 to 1447, and it is interesting to note this point of contact between an event of such importance in the history of the Western Church and the Diocese of Meath. There was a sharp struggle for power during all the time of the sitting between the Council and the Pope, and this superseding of the papal "provision" by an act of the Council is not without its significance. Silk had been rector of Killeen in the Diocese of Meath, and on his death, which occurred in 1450, he was buried in the abbey church of that parish.

After his death, William Ouldhall, a Carmelite of Norwich, was appointed, and held the See until 1459. During part of that time he was Chancellor of Ireland. He died and was buried at Ardraccan.

The next bishop was William Sherwood, who obtained a provisional bull from the Pope in 1460. He was, like so many others, a statesman bishop, and was for a time Deputy to George, Duke of Clarence, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He afterwards became Lord Chancellor. In 1463, Thomas, Earl of Desmond, was named Lord Deputy, but incurred almost at once the bitter hostility of the Bishop of Meath. Possibly this may have arisen from jealousy, or possibly from the fact that Meath was at the time devastated by repeated attacks from the men of Breffny and Oriel, without any adequate effort being made on the part of the deputy to oppose them. A brawl occurred among some of Desmond's followers, in which nine lives were lost. The bishop was denounced as the instigator of this quarrel. This led to further re-crimination, and the mutual enmity reached such a height that both parties went over to England, and



laid the case before the King. In this appeal the bishop was worsted, and Desmond returned in full favour to resume his government. The breach, however, was far from being healed, and Bishop Sherwood is credited with being one of the chief agents in bringing about the earl's overthrow. This occurred in 1468, when Desmond was somewhat treacherously seized at Drogheda, and immediately beheaded.<sup>12</sup> Bishop Sherwood's episcopacy lasted until 1482, when he died in Dublin, and was buried in the abbey of Newtown near Trim.

He was followed by John Payne, a Dominican monk, who was appointed by Pope Sixtus IV., in 1483. Payne is famous for having preached the sermon in Christ Church, Dublin, on the occasion of the coronation of Lambert Simnel. The Earl of Kildare, who was Lord Deputy, received the impostor, and as the bishop was a great friend of his, they were both united in a common cause. When the movement in favour of Simnel collapsed, they both sought and obtained pardon; and it is said of the bishop that when Sir Richard Edgcomb came over to settle the country, he was one of the first to attend on him. He was subsequently appointed to proclaim the Pope's absolution and the King's pardon to all those who returned to their duty. Warned by the false step he had once taken, he kept aloof from the attempt made to set up Perkin Warbeck in 1492, yet he did not altogether escape the suspicion of disloyalty, for he was one of those who in the following year were required to give "bonds and pledges for the observance of certain articles tending to the peace and well-being of the kingdom." After this he seems to have been received into greater favour, and was made Master of

<sup>12</sup> Leland, Book iii., chap. 3.

the Rolls in 1496. His friendship with the Earl of Kildare was not lasting, and they are said to have become "as mortal enemies as they had been friends." On one occasion the earl chased him into a church, and following with a drawn sword, dragged him out, and made him prisoner. The King had to interfere in order to secure his release, and both bishop and earl then went over to England to lay their quarrel before Henry VII. The story of their interview with that monarch is most amusing. First of all, the bishop made his complaint, and the only reply that the earl gave was that he was not learned, and, therefore, could not answer, and besides had forgotten all that he had done. The king then suggested that he should choose a councillor who would plead his cause; but the earl, with ready wit, was equal to the occasion, and said to the monarch, "Well, I can choose no better man than you, and by Saint Gride, I will choose none other." Then, taking the King by the hand, he added, "There is not in London a better mutton master or butcher than yonder shorn priest is." Bishop Payne tried to be dignified through all this, and appealed to the king, "Well, he is as you see, for all Ireland cannot rule yonder gentleman." But the King was so amused with the whole business that he refused to take the bishop seriously. "No?" he answered interrogatively, "then he is meet to rule all Ireland, seeing that all Ireland cannot rule him." with that he made the Earl Lord Deputy, and dismissed the pair.

According to Ware, Payne died on the sixth of March, 1506, "and was buried, says George Cogley, in Dublin, in a monastery of his own order, yet he erected a marble tomb, once adorned with brass plates, for himself and his successors, in Saint Patrick's,

Dublin, not far from the west gate, as appears from the rude epitaph in rhyme thereon inscribed." The marble tomb that Ware refers to has disappeared, but a copy of the inscription is preserved in a manuscript in the British Museum. It is as follows :—

Mitram qui possides memoriam niti recenses  
 Pres Midenses sint hic busta non habentes  
 Tu qui throno sedes memorare tua hic aedes,  
 Qui sum hac aede, fui quondam in tua sede.  
 Theologiae Doctor hujus busti fuit author  
 Payne cognominatus, Johannes ac nominatus.<sup>13</sup>

Bishop Payne was succeeded in 1507 by William Rokeby, Vicar of Halifax, who had been appointed Lord Chancellor of Ireland in 1498. His episcopate only lasted four years, after which he was translated to Dublin. There is nothing of importance to record about him while Bishop of Meath. It may, however, be interesting to note that after his translation to the archbishopric he confirmed the establishment of a college of clerks founded at Maynooth by the Earl of Kildare.

He was succeeded by Hugh Inge, who occupied the See for ten years, from 1512 to 1522, and after him came Richard Wilson, who was appointed to the bishopric by the Pope in 1523. Both these appointments, of course, belong to the reign of Henry VIII. The latter never came near his See, but spent all his time in England, leaving the diocese to take care of itself. After five years of absenteeism, a complaint was made of his continued neglect, and Archbishop Inge, who had been his predecessor in Meath, and was now Archbishop of Dublin, wrote to Cardinal Wolsey, telling him that "the diocese of Meth, which is large

<sup>13</sup> *Journal of the Association for Preservation of the Memorials of the Dead, Ireland*, vol. vi. p. 548.



in cure, and moste of value in this country for an honourable man to contynue in, is ferr in ruyne, both spiritually and temporally, by thabsence of the bisshopp there. If your grace think so convenient, som good man, being towards the same, might be provided unto the saide bisshoppicke, whiche sholde be to the great comforte, manifoldely, of all that dioces ; for it is said here, the bisshopp wol nat retourne.”<sup>14</sup> The prediction of the archbishop proved to be correct. Wilson did not return. He died, however, in the following year, and his place was then taken by Edward Staples, of whom we will have much to say in the next chapter.

In the rapid survey that we have taken of these successive appointments to the Bishopric of Meath, the impression left on the mind must inevitably be, that very little episcopal work can ever have been done. The bishops may have been good men—some of them doubtless, perhaps most, were good ; but they were nearly all men who had undertaken important political offices, and they can have had very little time for the supervision of a diocese so large in territorial extent. The whole story of the Anglo-Norman Church is not one that excites our admiration. With non-residents for rectors and politicians for bishops, there can have been little spiritual work of any kind.

In the distant see of Clonmacnoise the bishop was less of a potentate. His salary of four pounds nine and twopence did not lend itself much to sumptuous living, and even though we do find that on one occasion the King ordered the bailiffs of Bristol to give him out of the farm of their vill one hundred shillings of the King’s gift for his expenses,<sup>15</sup> yet it can scarcely be said that he was a rich man. He might, perhaps, eke

<sup>14</sup> *State Papers.*

<sup>15</sup> *Calendar of Documents relating to Ireland*, preserved in Record Office, London, 1257.

out his income by holding some parish *in commendam*. This was the case in 1398, when Philip, elect of Clonmacnoise, is allowed by the Pope to retain the parish of Saint Mary's, Moybrechri, in Ardagh, belonging to the Cistercian monastery at Granard, "to the end that he may not, on account of the slender revenues of his See, be compelled to beg, to the shame of the pontifical dignity.<sup>16</sup> Yet, poor as it was, the King insisted that no election should be made without his consent having been first asked,<sup>17</sup> and at least on one occasion the bishop was a high state official, for we find that in 1390, one Miles Cory, Bishop of Clonmacnoise, was made Lord Justice of Connaught by Richard II. Judging by the names, we would conclude that most of the bishops were Irishmen by birth. The small income and backward position had few attractions for Norman adventurers. It is probable, too, that Irish customs continued here long after they had been abrogated in Meath, and for that reason the English felt under no obligation to respect the sacred character of the place. It was attacked by William de Burgo in 1199, and was again plundered by the English in 1200, in 1201, and in 1204. After that a castle was built, and it became an important border fortress. The castle was erected on church land, and the builders cut down the bishop's fruit trees, and appropriated his cows, horses, oxen, and household utensils. On a complaint being made to the King, however, it was ordered that the bishop should be compensated for these losses.<sup>18</sup>

In consequence of the poverty of the See, there was sometimes considerable difficulty in finding a suitable occupant for it, and frequently it remained vacant for years at a time. Sometimes too the occupant was far

<sup>16</sup> *Vatican Records*.

<sup>17</sup> London Record Office, 1280.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1216

from possessing those qualities which we would expect to find in a bishop. In 1427, for example, after a long vacancy, Cormac MacCoughlan, who had previously been dean, was elected. He was connected with one of the leading Irish families in the neighbourhood, and possibly that fact had some weight in determining the choice. It led, however, to unpleasant consequences. A family feud arose, and the people of Clonmacnoise became involved in it. True to his Celtic instincts, and in a spirit not at all befitting the character of a bishop, he gathered his retainers together, and determined to fight for what he considered to be his rights. But, taking the sword, he was doomed to perish with the sword, and both he and his son, who was Archdeacon of Clonmacnoise, were left dead after the fray.<sup>19</sup> Yet we are not to suppose that religion and learning were altogether neglected even under such a regime. It is somewhere about this time that the death is recorded of O'Malone, Dean of Clonmacnoise. For some reason of another he incurred the disfavour of the Archbishop of Armagh, who in 1498 deposed him, styling him the "pretended dean," but the Annalists say of him that he was "the most learned man of all Ireland."<sup>20</sup>

It may be convenient here to complete the account of Clonmacnoise, though in doing so we pass to later times than those we are at present considering. The facts at our disposal are not numerous. In the sixteenth century (1534) we have the death recorded of an "erenach," Cahir MacCoughlan, but it is probable that the word here simply means "archdeacon," and does not imply the continuance of the old Celtic office, which was designated by that term. We have also another fighting ecclesiastic, one Cahir O'Melaghlin,

<sup>19</sup> Mant, *History of the Church of Ireland*, Vol. I., p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> *Annals of the Four Masters*, 1461.



who held the office of dean, and was killed in battle in 1539. After that, troublous times came for the old ecclesiastical city. A storm, in 1547, blew down the "two western wings of the cathedral." Five years later, the whole place was "reformed" by the drastic means that were then so common. This is the account, as given by the Four Masters, and it needs no enlargement, "Clonmacnoise was plundered and devastated by the English of Athlone, and the large bells were taken from the round tower. There was not left, moreover, a bell, small or large, an image, or an altar, or a book, or a gem, or even a glass in a window, which was not carried off. Lamentable was this deed, the plundering of the city of Keiran the holy patron."

This was in 1552, the last year of King Edward VI. The bishop at the time was Flan Gerawan, who had been appointed by provision of the Pope in 1539, but had two years later taken the oath of allegiance to Henry VIII., which implied the acknowledgment of the royal supremacy. He continued as bishop under Queen Mary, and died in 1554. He was succeeded by Peter Wall, who had professed Protestantism under Edward, but now made his peace with the church, and was "absolved from all censures which he had incurred." He continued to hold the See under Queen Elizabeth, and evidently adapted himself once more to the changed order of things, for he was presented by the Queen to the benefice of Ballyloughloe in 1560, which he held *in commendam* with his bishopric. He died in 1568, and the See was then united to that of Meath, which union continues to the present day.

The preamble to the Act of Parliament by which this union was made sets forth the ostensible reasons why it was deemed advisable, but the real reason was, in all probability, merely to add some small increase

of revenue to the Diocese of Meath. The Act begins, "Whereas, the Bishopric of Clonvicnoishe, within the realm of Ireland, and of the province of Armagh, is now vacant, and of so small revenues and profits that it is not equal living with a good parsonage in some churches of this realm, by reason whereof the poor inhabitants within that diocese are utterly destitute and disappointed of a good pasture, and thereby of long time been kept in ignorance as well of their duties towards God, as also towards the Queen's Majesty, and the commonwealth of this realm, to the great danger of their souls; and that the said diocese doth so adjoin unto the Bishopric of Meath as the bishop of that diocese might very conveniently instruct and edify the poor and needy of the other, if the same were united and consolidate to it, whereof should follow that the people shall be fed with sound doctrine, for their souls' health, and also, by the good policy of the reverend father that now doth, to the great utility of the subjects and good advancement of service, occupy the See of Meath, shortly brought and reduced to a great civility, and consequently to wealth, which thing would much increase the force of this realm." Moved by these considerations the act goes on to provide that henceforth Clonmacnoise shall be united to Meath, and that "the said Bishopric and Diocese of Meath and Clonmacnoise shall be adjudged, made, reputed, and taken as one whole and entire diocese of Meath, and by that name shall be called, known, and used, and not as several dioceses."<sup>21</sup>

The dignities connected with Clonmacnoise did not fall at once into abeyance, when the See was thus suppressed. The office of Archdeacon of Clonmacnoise continued for some time. and that of dean remains to

<sup>21</sup> Cotton's *Fasti*.

the present day. In the Visitation Return of 1616 the canonries are still recognized, and the list of them is given : Clonmore, Clonleyne, Clonclaragh, Clonmehan, Clonfinlagh, Clonderrig, Clonaster, Crumroe, Cloghran, Raghran, and Cloneffin. But in Bishop Ussher's Account of the Diocese, drawn up in 1622, they are said to be extinct, and only the deanery remained. "There hath been in times past," says that prelate, "belonging to that bishopric, a deanery still continuing, an archdeaconry, and twelve prebendaries, all long since wasted and extinct, which were all maintained by the offerings and funerals, the churches of Clonmacnoise being the ancient burial places of the kings of Ireland, and of the best of the nobility of the same."

In the same account Bishop Ussher gives a statement of the revenue derived by the Bishop of Meath from Clonmacnoise, and from this it would appear that already in his days a good part had been alienated by his predecessors. The account is curious and interesting, and as it is not very long, it may here be given in full.

THE STATE OF THE REVENUES BELONGING TO THE BISHOPRICK  
OF CLONMACNOISE REALLY UNITED TO THE BISHOPRIC OF  
MEATH BY ACT OF PARLIAMENT, VIZ. :—

All the lands in Westmeath belonging to this bishopric were demised by Bishop Jones on the 1st of November, 1592, to Edward Malone for sixty-one years, he paying thereout ten beeves yearly, and preserving the young hawks of Goshawkes, falcons, and tassells, breeding in the woods of Clonmacnoise, half of which he is bound to deliver to the Bishop of Meath at his house in Ardraccan, or to forfeit four pounds for every hawk that shall be stolen or otherwise negligently lost. But by reason of the continual felling of the great timber in those woods (for which the said lessee hath no licence granted him in the lease) the hawks within this year or two have forsaken the place, and so the bishop hath lost the benefit of that reservation.



All the lands in the County of Roscommon belonging to the said bishopric were passed in fee farm by Bishop Jones on the 28th of November, 1586, to Anthony Brabazon, for the yearly rent of ten marks Irish, or five pounds sterling. There are twelve quarters of land enjoyed by this grant, much whereof was not in the Bishop's possession at the time wherein this state was passed. There is none of the clergy's hands to the conveyance, neither doth it appear by any witnesses that their seal was affixed thereunto.

Two quarters of land lying near unto Galway passed (as it is said) in fee farm for the annual rent of twenty shillings Irish, or fifteen shillings sterling. This conveyance I have not seen.

Four quarters of land in the County of Mayo, called Killshamy, leased by Bishop Brady, on the 26th of August, 1578, to James Garvey for sixty-one years, for the yearly rent of four nobles Irish, or twenty shillings sterling.

The Vicarages of Ballyloughloe, Tessaran, and Levanaghan, otherwise Slevanaghan, set for the yearly rent of £39 sterling.

Certain prebends annexed to the bishopric, set for the yearly rent of £7 sterling, or thereabout.

An eel weir upon the river of the Shannon, worth £3 6s. 8d., sterling.

Summa totalis hereof, each beef being rated at twenty shillings sterling, amounteth unto £66 20d. sterling.

There is a great proportion of land in the province of Connaught, which anciently belonged to the bishopric of Clonmacnoise, the particulars of which are to be seen extracted out of the register of that church, but, the original book hath lately been conveyed away by the practice of a lewd fellow, who hath, thereupon, fled the country.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Elrington's Ussher—Vol. i. Appendix p. lviii.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE DISSOLUTION OF THE MONASTERIES.

WHEN the death of Bishop Wilson left the See of Meath once more vacant, ecclesiastical affairs in England were rapidly approaching a crisis. The divorce proceedings of King Henry VIII. had been in progress for a considerable time, and it began to be evident that the consent of the Pope, which at one time had been confidently expected, would not be obtained. Cardinal Wolsey was in disgrace, and was soon to close his eventful career. But as yet there was no actual rupture with the See of Rome, so the King sent his request to the Pope that Edward Staples should be the new bishop, and the Pope on his part was glad to gratify the King by making the appointment.<sup>1</sup> Staples was a native of Lincolnshire, and had been commendatorem of the hospital of Saint Bartholomew in London, but does not seem to have taken any very prominent part in public affairs before his elevation to the episcopate.

He had not been long in Ireland before he was made to feel that his new dignity would be by no means a bed of roses. Those who had the administration of affairs were at variance among themselves, and were continually sending complaints to headquarters. The Earl of Kildare, who was then Lord Deputy, affected the ways of a chieftain, and was one of those English who had become more Irish than the Irish themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Ware.

By his influence, Archbishop Allen, of Dublin, was displaced from his office of Lord Chancellor, an act which increased the enmity already existing between the two. The ecclesiastic became at once the leader of a discontented party in the Privy Council, who in 1533, forwarded a document to the King which detailed the miserable condition into which the government of the country had fallen, and deplored "the great decay of this land, which is so far fallen into misery, and brought into such ruin, that neither the English order, tongue, nor habit be used, nor the King's laws obeyed, above twenty miles in compass."<sup>2</sup> In consequence of this complaint the earl was summoned to London, and was ordered at the same time to appoint a deputy in his place, for whose loyalty he was to be responsible. He appointed his son, Thomas, called from the elegance of his apparel Silken Thomas, a young man of about twenty years of age, hot headed and passionate, and naturally without that experience which would fit him for so responsible a post.

It was not long before a rumour was promulgated that the earl had been beheaded by order of the king. It is suspected that this rumour was set on foot by some of Kildare's enemies, in the hopes that it would lead his young deputy into some act of indiscretion. If so, it succeeded only too well. Silken Thomas gathered together at once a somewhat motley retinue—among whom, curiously enough, was a Meath parson named Walsh, Rector of Loughsuedy—and presenting himself at the Council Chamber in Saint Mary's Abbey, declared himself a rebel, determined to avenge what he termed the murder of his father. The Archbishop of Armagh endeavoured to reason with him, but in vain. The young lord would listen to no remonstrances,

<sup>2</sup> *State Papers.*



but went forth at the head of his followers, and shortly afterwards laid siege to Dublin. The Archbishop of Dublin endeavoured to escape by boat, but was stranded at Clontarf, and was killed by Lord Thomas, at Artane. It does not appear what part the new Bishop of Meath took in these proceedings, but he too considered his life to be in danger, and fled, with greater success than the archbishop, for he managed to make his way safely to England. It was by no means a pleasant beginning for his episcopate.

Meath suffered considerably in this rebellion. First Dunboyne was burned by the insurgents. Then a skirmish was fought at Dunshaughlin, in which they were worsted. Afterwards they took Trim, and Lord Thomas "ther robbed not only the same (towne of Trim), but also brente a great part thereof, and took all the cataill of the countrie thereaboughtes."<sup>3</sup> Several of the Meath gentry joined in the insurrection, and some of the clergy. Among the latter was Charles Reynolds, Archdeacon of Kells, who went with others on a mission, first to the Pope, and then to the Emperor, Charles V., hoping that in the irritation caused by the divorce of Queen Katherine these potentates would be ready to give help against King Henry. Their efforts in this direction, however, proved fruitless, and in the meantime the followers of Silken Thomas began to fall away from him, until at length he was obliged to submit. He was sent to the Tower, and in 1537 was executed with five of his uncles at Tyburn.

As to Charles Reynolds, or as was better pleased to call himself, Cahir MacRanell, he was deprived of his archdeaconry in 1535, and was afterwards attainted of treason by the Irish Parliament. Whether he suffered imprisonment or death in consequence of this

<sup>3</sup> *State Papers. Butler's Trim.*

attainder does not appear. On his deprivation, Thomas Lockwood was appointed Archdeacon of Kells, and he held the office until 1541, with the promise that he was to succeed to the Archdeaconry of Meath when that office would become vacant. In 1543 he was made Dean of Christ Church, Dublin, and in the following year licence was granted to the Bishop of Meath to appropriate and unite to the See of Meath, for ever, the Archdeaconry of Kells with the Rectory of Nobber. This licence seems to have been inoperative, for in 1547 Lockwood is again archdeacon, but whether it is that he was appointed a second time, or that he never really resigned, but was allowed to hold his two dignities together, does not appear. We have record of another Archdeacon of Kells, Thomas Lancaster, who held office from 1566 to 1584, and we have no account of the date when the bishop came into effective possession of the dignity, but in 1622 Ussher reports it as annexed to the Bishopric of Meath.<sup>4</sup>

While Bishop Staples was in England, during this rebellion, the acts were passed by Parliament which established the King's supremacy, and abolished the payment to the Pope of Peter's pence, first fruits, tenths, and other impositions, that had up to that time been exacted in the Church of England. To these measures he gave a hearty adhesion, and on his return to Ireland, he was foremost in endeavouring to secure the enactment of similar measures in that country. It may be well again to remind the reader that this opposition to papal interference with the affairs of the kingdom was nothing new. Students of history will recall a long succession of English Acts of Parliament, beginning with the reign of William the

<sup>4</sup> Cotton's *Fasti*.

Conqueror, and continued down to the time that we are now considering, which deal with this subject. And the same thing is true of Ireland. There also the interference of the Pope was again and again repudiated. A solitary example may here be given, not on account of its singularity or importance, but because it is in a way connected with the Diocese of Meath. In 1475, Bishop William Sherwood, being deputy for the Duke of Clarence, held a parliament in Dublin, and one of its first acts was to forbid, under pain of treason, that any one should bring Bulls from Rome. And, as we have seen the same thing was shown in the appointment of bishops, for while they generally obtained papal "provision," they were not allowed to enjoy the temporalities of the see until they had renounced the provision so obtained, and paid a fine for their offence.

A parliament was held in Dublin in 1536, for the purpose of passing acts similar to those which had been already passed in England. In this assembly Staples took a prominent part. Its first statute was the Act of Succession, which declared the marriage of King Henry with Katherine of Aragon to be null and void, and settled that the succession should be limited to the children of Anne Boleyn. Before the sittings were finished, however, this act had to be repealed, for Anne had been led to the block, and the King had taken to himself another spouse. Then came the Act of Royal Supremacy, by which it was ordained that "the King, his heirs, and successors, should be the supreme head on earth of the Church of Ireland." Other acts reserved the payment of first-fruits to the King, forbade anyone to maintain by act or writing the usurped power of the Pope, and put a tax on all ecclesiastical incomes of one-twentieth, which was to



be granted for the King's use. All these, except the Act of Royal Supremacy, passed without much difficulty, and even that act was agreed to after some opposition. Shortly afterwards, at the suggestion of Bishop Staples, Henry assumed the title of "King of Ireland." Up to that time "Lord of Ireland" was the style that had been employed.

In all these parliamentary discussions, and in many other ways, the King was zealously supported by the Bishop of Meath, and by George Brown, Archbishop of Dublin. Yet the King, for some reason that it is difficult to understand, was not altogether satisfied with their behaviour. In 1537 he addressed to each of them a letter of remonstrance. These letters are both couched in somewhat vigorous terms—that to Brown, perhaps, more so than the other. In writing to Staples the king reminds him that he had advanced him to his bishopric on account of his zeal in preaching the pure word of God, but charges him with slackness and negligence, and tells him that "if he does not ensue this advertisement, the King will look upon him for his remissness as shall appertain."<sup>5</sup> We have no means of knowing what was the occasion of this extraordinary remonstrance, and the reply of the bishop has not been preserved.

Almost immediately after this came the dissolution of the monasteries—an event which changed the whole condition of the church, especially in places where the Norman families predominated, as in the Diocese of Meath. Already some of the lesser establishments had been suppressed; then an act of parliament was passed in 1536, by which the religious houses and monasteries of Ireland were granted to the King, to the number of three hundred and seventy. In

<sup>5</sup> *State Papers.* Mant's History of the Church of Ireland. vol. i., p. 127.

1538 a commission sat for the repression of the abbeys, and finally, letters patent were issued by Henry VIII., in 1539, appointing commissioners who were to signify to the heads of religious houses that the King wished them "to return to some honest mode of living, and to the true religion," and who were at the same time to receive their "resignations and surrenders willingly tendered." They were also empowered to assign competent pensions to all those who spontaneously surrendered.

These commissioners began their work at once, and visited the several religious establishments. They dispersed the inmates, and made inventories of all the property, moveable and immoveable, which was then offered for sale. As far as we can learn, they met with no opposition; indeed, there is more than a suspicion that their action was welcomed by the people, who saw in the movement an opportunity for enriching themselves. In the sales that were made, the full value, or anything nearly approaching to it, was never realized, and those who purchased the broad acres belonging to each institution made such good bargains for themselves that they were at once raised to comparative affluence. There were few landowners in Meath who did not reap a rich harvest for themselves at this time, and this fact silenced whatever objections they might otherwise have made.

In England the dissolution of the monasteries gave new life to the parochial organization. In Ireland the tendency of the measure was in the opposite direction. We have already seen how important a part the abbeys formed in the religious organisation of the Diocese of Meath. They were for the most part rich, having amassed the benefactions of several succeeding generations; whereas the parish

churches, with a few notable exceptions, were poor, and were rendered the more so as their incomes had been in so many instances appropriated to the support of their more powerful rivals. Men of learning, of polish, of good family, were to be found in the monasteries. As to the ordinary clergy, it may suffice to quote the words of Archbishop Browne: "They be in a manner as ignorant as the people, being not able to say Mass, or pronounce the words, they not knowing what they themselves say in the Roman tongue." The English loved to have it so. Their own countrymen were in the abbeys. The despised Irish held the poor cures. Remembering all this, we can easily realize what the dissolution of the monasteries meant for a diocese such as Meath. It was a severe blow to the efficiency of the church. It might easily have been made a great measure of reform, and on the ruin of the monasteries an efficient parochial system might have been built up. If that had been done, the subsequent history would have developed on different lines; but the opportunity was allowed to pass, and for generations the work of the church in the diocese was crippled by the blow which it then received.

It is well to trace the results of this measure a little more in detail. It meant, first of all, that nearly all the churches which had any claim to architectural beauty were allowed to fall into ruin. When a handsome abbey church, and a barn-like parish church stood in close proximity, as they often did, we would have expected that the finer building would be preserved to the parish. But this was by no means the case. The cost of maintenance in a large church is considerable, and even if those to whom the abbey buildings were granted were willing to allow the continued use of



the chapels, there were no means left by which the fabrics could be maintained. But, as a general rule, they were not willing to give such permission. Most of the grantees were averse to the doctrines of the Reformation, and on that ground, if on no other, would have withheld their consent. But, quite apart from religious considerations, the eagerness which they showed in grasping at church property left little hope that they would voluntarily restore any of their booty. There were, of course, exceptions. The churches of Saint Mary's Drogheda, of Duleek, Trim, Athboy, and a few others, were abbey churches, saved to the church from the general wreck. But these were exceptions. As a rule, the great abbey churches were allowed to fall into ruin.

The parish churches, though they were supposed to be untouched by the new law, suffered very much in an indirect way. We have already seen how the abbeys had appropriated the incomes of most of them. When the dissolution came, all these churches passed into lay hands. That is to say, the man who purchased the dissolved monastery, purchased with it all the parish churches which it had formerly possessed, and became in effect the rector. As such he drew the income, and was supposed to be responsible for the cure of souls, to provide for which he was obliged to employ a vicar. But this obligation was in many cases evaded, and in those instances in which some effort was made to fulfil it, the income provided was so miserable that the services of efficient men could not be obtained. This was not altogether a new scandal. It existed under the monastic system, but it became a more crying evil now, for up to the dissolution very few people in the Diocese of Meath, were absolutely dependent on the parish churches for the means of

grace, whereas, after that time, they had no other provision. The small payment made to the vicars was, therefore, not such an unmitigated evil in the former times, while in the latter it wrought an incalculable amount of mischief. When the clergy were paid at a rate little better than that of a labouring man, and in some cases even less than that, the natural result was that they were ignorant, taken from the lower classes, and not at all the kind of men who would further the cause of reformation.

Evils such as these must have been quite manifest at the time, if any one cared at all about the subject ; nor was the remedy hard to find. The thing that ought to have been done was to have restored the incomes that had been taken from the parishes, and given to the monasteries. Then nearly every parish could have secured for itself a competent incumbent, with a university training, and who would be abreast with the thought of the age. Such men would have been a tower of strength to the church in the unsettled times that were so soon to come, and would have instructed their people in sound doctrine. But even if the cupidity of the King, and of those great families who saw in the measure a means of enriching themselves, did not admit of this, there might have been a judicious re-arrangement of parishes, which would have remedied some of the worst results. The population was sparse, and the old parishes were exceedingly small in extent. Unions could, therefore, have been made, which would have provided moderate but sufficient incomes, and which would not have unduly taxed the energies of the incumbents. The present parish of Ratoath, for example, is not one that would ever have been unmanageably large, but it is a union of what was at this time twelve parishes. There are

other instances in the diocese nearly as remarkable as this. If these had been united then, as they are now, or if six of these parishes had been grouped in one union, and six in another, there would have been sufficient income for the clergyman, and not more work than would have given him sufficient occupation. But such an amalgamation of parishes seems never to have been thought of, and indeed, as things were managed, was rendered quite impossible. Taking still the same example, eight of the twelve parishes belonged to monasteries, and they were allowed to pass into the hands of six different people, who, thereupon became patrons of the vicarages. Of the other four, the patronage was divided between the Barnwall family, the Parsons family, the Archbishop of Armagh, and the King. In order, therefore, to effect such a union as that which we now have, it would have been necessary to obtain the consent of these ten parties. The seizure of the monastic property gave a unique opportunity, for then eight of the little parishes, together with the one which was already in the King's gift, were absolutely at the disposal of his majesty, but the thing was too manifestly advantageous to have been ever thought of by such men as were then in power. In after years, instead of unions, we have pluralities. They were in many cases the only way in which a clergyman could obtain for himself a living wage. But these, instead of increasing the efficiency of the church, made confusion worse confounded, for the same incumbent would undertake the duties of parishes so widely separate from one another that it would be physically impossible for him to attend to all. Wonder is sometimes expressed at the fact that the Church of Ireland made so little progress for many years, and that it failed to carry



the bulk of the people with it in the work of reform. Those who are acquainted with the history of the time will rather wonder that she survived at all. Certainly everything was done that man could do to bring about her destruction.

Another remark must also be made before we dismiss this part of our subject. The dissolution of the monasteries is often spoken of as one of the incidents of the Reformation. There could not be a greater mistake. In England it weakened the power of Rome ; in Ireland it rather strengthened it ; but in both cases it was simply a measure of disendowment—neither more or less. It handed over the property of the Church, in Meath at all events, to laymen who were opposed to reform. It sent through the country the disbanded monks, smarting from a sense of wrong, and it retained as the ministers of the churches those who were opposed at all times to everything that was English. It may have been different in the sister country. In Ireland, it was the very worst course that could have been adopted in order to obtain for the doctrines of the Reformation a favourable hearing.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE REFORMATION.

THE dissolution of the monasteries, as we have seen, was not in any sense a measure of reform. In England, where there was a popular movement against Romanism, it removed a serious obstacle out of the way; but in Ireland, where no such movement existed, it hindered rather than furthered the cause. In both countries, however, it was the precursor of laws and movements on more distinctively Reformation lines. The first of these laws was the statute declaring the King's supremacy, as has been already noted. The bill declares "that the King, his heirs and successors, should be supreme head on earth of the Church of Ireland, and should have power and authority to visit, reform, restrain, and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, contempts, and enormities, whatsoever they be, which by any manner, spiritual authority, or jurisdiction, ought or may lawfully be reformed, restrained or amended, most of the pleasure of Almighty God, the increase of virtue in Christ's religion, and for the conservation of peace, unity, and tranquillity of this land of Ireland; any usage, custom, foreign laws, foreign authority, prescription, or any other thing or things to the contrary notwithstanding."<sup>1</sup>

This was, in effect, nothing more than a round-

<sup>1</sup> Most of the information in this chapter is taken from the *State Papers* of the period.

about way of asserting the right of the Church of Ireland to act as an independent national church, untrammelled by interference from without, and owing no allegiance to any but the constitutional monarch of the country. The act, it may be further noted, did not concern itself with any Theological dogma, though, no doubt, it made the way open for change and reform. The same parliament passed another act which, unfortunately, was not calculated to commend its ecclesiastical measures to the native inhabitants of the land. It provided that only English-speaking clergymen should be appointed to the several parishes, "unless, after four proclamations in the next market town, such could not be had." And those who were thus appointed were bound by oath to "learn and teach the English tongue to all and every being under the rule; and to bid the beads in the English tongue, and to preach the word of God in English." It may have been, and doubtless was, an excellent and desirable thing to teach the people English, but to use the Reformed Church as the chief means for that purpose was to create a prejudice against it at the outset.

Bishop Staples and Archbishop Brown were both active supporters of these new laws, and emulated one another in reforming zeal. Though thus united in sentiment, they were far from working harmoniously together. The language which these most reverend prelates employed when speaking of one another is, to say the least, vigorous. It is not easy to tell how the quarrel commenced, but it would appear that the Bishop of Meath had preached a sermon at Loughsuedy, with the doctrine of which the Archbishop did not agree, and, accordingly, he preached a sermon in reply in Christ Church Cathedral. The Precentor of Saint



Patrick's, James Humphrey, was present, and at once wrote to the Bishop of Meath, giving him an account of what had taken place. Thereupon the Bishop preached again at Kilmainham, which, though beside Dublin, was out of the Archbishop's jurisdiction, and producing Humphrey's letter, proceeded to attack the Archbishop, calling him "heretic and beggar," and applying to him other equally choice epithets. Brown immediately complained to the Lord Chancellor in the following letter :—

I think you have not, no more I trust the Commissioners hath, committed to oblivion the occasion of mine answer unto the Bishop of Meath, when I preached at Christ Church the fourth Sunday in Lent. He hath not only, since that time, by pen (as you know his wont full well) railed and raged against me, calling me heretic and beggar, with other rabulous revilings, as I have written unto my lord, which I am ashamed to rehearse ; but also on Palm Sunday, at afternoon, in Kilmainham, where the stations and also pardons be now as bremely <sup>2</sup> used as ever they were. Yet I cannot help it because the place is exempt ; but I trust it is not so exempt but that the King's commandment might take place. There as you know, he is highly bolstered. He made a sermon, which, indeed, he is not to be blamed for any new doctrine that was in it, for the sermon was made many years ago, in a book entitled *Tresdecim Sermones*. After that he had absolved his sermon, besides certain checks therein contained against me, yet he, standing still in the pulpit, desiring the auditory of patience to hearken a few words more ; and therewith plucked he out of his bosom a letter the which, though it were not true, he openly asserted to be sent him from Dublin, from a servant of his that heard me preach, comprehending certain points of my sermon inveighed against him. The truth is, Humphrey, of St. Patrick's, wrote the letter, signifying to him far otherwise than I spake. Nevertheless he made there, at his pleasure, a comment on the said letter without all honest shame, even before mine own face, present at his sermon, with such a stomach as I think the three-mouthed Cerberous of hell could

<sup>2</sup> Bremely, "fiercely, angrily, hence in more general senses, as hotly, vehemently, strenuously, strongly."—*New English Dictionary*.

not have uttered it more viperously. And all this he does, to elevate the authority committed unto me by my prince, and to pluck away the credence of my people from me, whereby I shall neither edify unto God, nor yet to my prince. He glossed every sentence after such an opprobrious fashion, that every honest ear glowed to hear it. He exhorted them all, yea and so much as in him lay he adjured them, to give no credence unto me whatsoever I said, for before God he would not. Good Master Allen, leave not this unshowed unto my Lord Privy Seal. Now you be where you may do good. I am well assured that unmaintained he never durst be so bold. You know what I mean.

The insinuation in this last sentence was that Staples was supported in his attacks on the Archbishop by Grey, the Lord Deputy. The congregation must have had a lively time listening to a discourse such as is here described, and the feelings of Archbishop Brown, as he listened to the invectives of his most reverend brother, can be better imagined than described.

Brown was not contented with writing on this subject. He proceeded to put Humphrey in prison, "till time that I knew further the King's pleasure in correcting such obstinate and sturdy papists." He also writes to Cromwell, "I have committed now of late to ward the Bishop of Meath's suffragan, which, in his sermon prayed first for the Bishop of Rome, then for the emperor, and at last for the King's grace, saying, 'I pray God he never depart this world until he hath made amends.' What shall a man think be the bishop that hath such a suffragan?" They were afterwards brought to trial at Trim, but were acquitted. Lord Chancellor Allen gives this account of the proceedings :

Here was a bishop and a friar put in the Castle of Dublin for their high and notorious offences against the King's majesty, and at the last sessions were brought to Trim, to have them indicted, arraigned, and suffered accordingly ; yet our masters

of the law and all other (in good faith, except my Lord Treasurer and very few besides) be such papists, hypocrites, and worshippers of idols, that they were not indicted; whereat my lord of Dublin, Mr. Treasurer, and the Master of the Rolls, were very angry. Howbeit they could not remedy it. The three would not come into the chapel where the idol of Trim stood, to the intent they would not occasion the people; notwithstanding my Lord Deputy, very devoutly kneeling before her, heard three or four masses.

It was not to be expected that Staples would be silent under such an attack. He asserted that the archbishop had accused him of "malice and disdain," and he appealed to the Privy Council to adjudicate between them. He also wrote letters to those in power, in one of which he said that Brown "boasteth himself to rule all the clergy under our sovereign lord, and he hath given a taste of his good demeanour, that every honest man is not only weary thereof, but reckoneth that pride and arrogance hath ravished him from the right remembrance of himself." In the same letter he appeals to his correspondent, "If you can preserve the poor soul [that is, himself] from the purgatory of the Bishop of Dublin, I will give every of you one mass penny. Alas, poor soul!"

The Privy Council, being thus appealed to, appointed the Prior of Christ Church, the Chantor of Saint Patrick's, and Nicholas Stanihurst to examine into the merits of the case, and to report. Thereupon Archbishop Brown drew up the following interrogatories which he desired should be presented to the witnesses for the Bishop of Meath:

Imprimis, whether the Bishop of Meath, in his sermon made the second Sunday in Lent, at Saint Owen's, did say these words following, viz., "Good people, beware of seditious and false preachers, which moveth questions of Scripture; for I tell you all misery, all wretchedness, and also death, came



by moving of a question ; for they that moveth questions of Scripture doth preach now this way, now that way, and be inconstant ? ”

Secondarily, whether the Archbishop of Dublin did inveigh against the Bishop of Meath's sermon, and prove that it was lawful to move questions, viz., at Christ Church, in his sermon made the fourth Sunday in Lent, whereat were present the Commissioners and the King's Council ?

Thirdly, whether the Bishop of Meath, after his sermon made on Palm Sunday, at Kilmainham, did pluck out of his bosom a letter, which he said his servants sent him, and whether the contents thereof were feigned and untrue ; to the said Archbishop of Dublin, not only slanderous, but also contemptuous ?

Fourthly, how negligently the Bishop of Meath did pass over this text, “ Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am,” etc., as who saith it made nothing to the purpose ?

Fifthly, whether the Bishop of Meath sent a letter unto Humphrey, the contents whereof in parts was that the said Bishop of Meath would prove the Archbishop of Dublin to be a heretic ?

The sixth article, whether the Bishop of Rome's pardons did on Palm Sunday hang in the church of Kilmainham, according to the day of station beforetime used there, for the maintenance of the Bishop of Rome's authority, or not ?

To the last article, whether the Bishop of Meath said, “ Good people, give no credence to him, believe him not ; for I tell you, if ye will, in faith I will not ? ”

On this other side be expressed the articles ministered by the Bishop of Meath, whereupon certain witnesses should be examined upon.

Imprimis, that they that were chosen to say betwixt the Archbishop of Dublin and the Bishop of Meath should upon their oath be examined whether they were at Kilmainham on Palm Sunday or no.

Secondarily, Whether that they heard him there in his sermon touch the king's supremacy or not.

Thirdly, whether he spake anything of the Bishop of Rome.

Fourthly, whether he in the pulpit did call the Archbishop of Dublin a heretic, or not.

This unseemly dispute went no further, for by

the influence of Cromwell, a reconciliation was effected between the parties, but it can be easily understood that it was by no means calculated to advance the cause which both prelates professed to have at heart.

It will be noticed that in one of the letters, Archbishop Brown speaks of a suffragan of the Bishop of Meath. This is the only intimation we have that such an officer existed, and we have no means of knowing who this suffragan was. It would appear, however, that the employment of suffragan bishops was not uncommon in those days. An English Act of King Henry VIII., speaks of such suffragans as "having been accustomed to be had within this realm," and it proceeds to make enactments relating to their appointment in England "and elsewhere within the King's dominions." Such a bishop must have been appointed by Staples to help him in the management of his diocese, and we have only to remember how many extraneous duties were then laid upon the Bishop of Meath to know that, if the episcopal work was not to be altogether neglected, such an appointment was most necessary. But we would never have known that this suffragan ever existed, if it were not for the casual mention of him in this connection.

As an incident in the work of dissolution of the monasteries, there was, as a matter of course, the destruction of the images. In most cases this excited no particular attention at the time, and calls for no remark. But in the case of so-called "miraculous" images, it was different. To these large numbers flocked at the yearly festivals, and at other times, and this influx of pilgrims formed an important source of income. These devotees resented most strongly the destruction of the objects of their devotion, and

the work was not accomplished without considerable opposition. There were several such images in Meath, and two of them—that at Ballyboggan, and that at Trim—were specially famous. Of the latter, we read in the Annals, under date 1444: “A great miracle was wrought by the image of Mary at Trim, namely, it restored to sight a blind man, speech to a dumb man, and the use of his feet to a cripple, stretched out the hand of a person to whose side it had been fastened, and caused a pregnant woman to bring forth cats.” At them ere suggestion that this wonder-working image was to be destroyed, there was a great commotion. Archbishop Brown, writing to Cromwell, tells him, “There goithe a common brewte amonges the Irish men that I intende to plope downe Our Lady of Tryme, with other places of pilgrimages, as the Holy Crosse, and such like, which indeade I never attempted, although my conscience wolde right well serve me to oppresse souche ydolles.” Notwithstanding this opposition of the people, however, the image of the Blessed Virgin which had so long been the pride of St. Mary’s Abbey at Trim, was publicly burnt, and at the same time “divers vases, jewels, and ornaments of gold and silver, bells, and the utensils and household furniture” were sold, and the amount, £186 15s. 2d. paid into the King’s treasury.

In these proceedings it was Archbishop Brown who took the initiative. Bishop Staples was less energetic, and was not particularly successful. He found opposition on every hand, and only a half-hearted support from those who were in authority. In 1548 he writes to the Lord Deputy, complaining of the excessive hatred raised against him amongst all ranks of society for his preaching the reformed religion, for which, he says, the people accused him of



heresy. So great was their enmity that the unfortunate prelate feared for his life, and asked to be relieved of the cares of his office, and to have instead "a chamber among the petty canons, which was Sir John Russell's." The following extract will show how difficult was the position of the bishop, and how little progress he had made in advancing the cause of the Reformation in his diocese.

After most hearty commendation in like manner, I thank you for your letter, and when by the same you wished me to be defended from ill tongues, you have not heard such rumour as is here in all the country over against me, as my friends do show me. One gentlewoman, to whom I did christen a man child which beareth my name, came in great counsel to a friend of mine, desiring how she might find means to change her child's name; and he asked her why? and she said "Because I would not have him bear the name of a heretic." A gentleman dwelling nigh unto me forbade his wife, which would have sent her child to be confirmed by me, saying his child should not be confirmed by him that denied the Sacrament of the Altar. A friend of mine, rehearsing at the marks that I would preach this next Sunday at Navan, divers answered that they would not come there, lest they should learn to be heretics. One of our lawyers declared to a multitude that it is a great pity that I was not burned, for I preached heresy, so I was worthy therefor; and if I preached right, yet I was worthy to be burned that kept the truth from knowledge. This gentlemen loveth no sodden meat, nor can skill but only of roasting. One of our judges said to myself that it should be proved to my face that I preached against learning. A beneficed man, of my own promotion, came into me weeping and desired me that he might declare his mind unto me without displeasure. I said I was well content. "My lord," said he, "before you went last to Dublin, you were the best beloved man in your diocese that ever came in it, and now you are the worst beloved that ever came here." I asked why? "Why," saith he, "for you have taken open part with the State, that false heretic, and preached against the Sacrament of the Altar, and deny saints, and will make us worse than Jews; where, if the country wist how, they would eat you; and besought me to take heed

to myself, for he feared more than he durst tell me. He said, "You have more curses than you have hairs of your head, and I advise you, for Christ's sake, not to preach at the Navan, as I hear you will do." I said it was my charge to preach, and because there was most resort (God willing), I would not fail but preach there. Hereby you may perceive what case I am in. But put all to God; and now, as my especial friend, and a man to whom my heart beareth earnest affection, I beseech you for your advice. As God shall judge me, I am afraid of my life divers ways. This bearer shall show you certain instructions. Let him write your advice, not writing your name for chance.<sup>3</sup>

Nor was these the only troubles that beset Bishop Staples. He found, as so many found in those days, that King Henry was an uncertain friend. We have already seen how in 1537 that monarch censured him for neglect of his ecclesiastical duties. In 1539 we find him again in trouble, and being obliged to use all the influence of his friends to extricate himself. We note, too, how in several of his letters to Cromwell there is the intimation that a small present is enclosed—a point which needs no comment, but which sheds an unpleasant light on the state of public morals at the time. Certainly, the position of Bishop of Meath was not an enviable one in those days. Nevertheless Staples managed in several ways to enrich himself. He obtained permission from time to time to alienate portion of the property of the See, which meant of course in each case a money payment to himself, though the permanent income was thereby impoverished. He was also authorized by Henry VIII., as we have seen, to annex the Archdeaconry of Kells, which dignity had remained to his days, an interesting reminiscence of the time when Kells was a separate See. It may be further noted that, following the example

<sup>3</sup> Shirley, *Original Letters and Papers in Illustration of the History of the Church in Ireland*.

of Archbishop Brown, Staples took to himself a wife. It was for this reason that, as we shall see, he was afterwards deposed by Queen Mary.

From what has been said above we may fairly conclude that, notwithstanding the preaching and exertions of the Bishop of Meath, no serious movement towards reform was made in the diocese during the reign of King Henry, and that scarcely any was even attempted. It is disappointing, too, to find that in this crisis, when care should have been taken to provide an efficient ministry, some of the worst evils of former times were perpetuated. In 1538 we have a lad of fifteen years of age obtaining a benefice in the diocese—probably the parish of Trim, the most important of all the parishes in the district. A little more vigour was shown shortly after the accession of Edward VI. The Protestant Party in England then obtained a complete ascendancy, and though they began to work in the sister country much earlier than in Ireland, yet their policy was that the one island should follow the other in the religious changes that were then taking place.

Early in 1551, a royal mandate was sent to the viceroy directing him to give notice to the clergy that in future the service was to be read in English and not in Latin. Sir Anthony Saint Leger thereupon assembled the archbishops, bishops, and clergy, and communicated to them the King's decree. The Archbishop of Armagh, though he was one of those appointed by Henry in opposition to the Pope, gave an uncompromising resistance. He objected to a Liturgy in English, for he said, "Then shall every illiterate fellow read Mass." The Lord Deputy reminded him that there were already among the clergy a large number of illiterates who could not



have translated the Latin which they used. But, though no reply was given to this statement, which it is to be feared was only too true, yet the archbishop was not convinced, and after some further parleying, he left the assembly, bringing with him the other bishops of his province, with the exception of the Bishop of Meath, who remained behind, and gave in his adhesion to the new rule. The Archbishop of Dublin also accepted it, as did also the Bishops of Kildare, Leighlin, and Limerick, and possibly some others. How far this implied that the English Liturgy was in use in the diocese of Meath it is impossible for us now to say. The probability is that it implied very little, and that the great majority of the clergy, if they ever heard of the decree, simply ignored it.

A few weeks after this Saint Leger was recalled to England, and his place as Lord Deputy was taken by Sir James Crofts. He brought with him two instructions from England. One was to prevent the sale of bells, church goods, chantry lands, and other church property; for the Anglo-Irish gentry, though they had no love for the Reformation, were eager enough to enrich themselves with the spoils of the church to which they professed to be attached. The other instruction was to propagate the worship of God in the English tongue, and to translate the service into Irish, for the use of those places where it was needed. The intention here was good. Alas, it was only an intention, and was not put into practice. Possibly, if Edward had lived longer, this Irish Liturgy might have been produced.

The opposition of the Archbishop of Armagh to the introduction of a vernacular service book was such a serious obstacle to the work of reformation, that the Lord Deputy deemed it advisable to make one more

effort in order to secure his compliance with the proposed change. He accordingly arranged for a conference, which was held in Saint Mary's Abbey, Dublin, at which the subject was discussed. Bishop Staples was the principal speaker on the Protestant side, and his observations show him to have been a theologian of no mean order. He sets forth with clearness, and at the same time with the utmost courtesy, the reasons why, in his judgment, the new service book should be adopted. The following is the report, as contained in a manuscript preserved in the British Museum.

ARCHBISHOP.—My Lord. Why is your honour so for compliance with these clergymen who are fallen from the mother Church?

LORD DEPUTY.—Because, reverend father, I would fain unite them and you if possible.

ARCHBISHOP.—How can that be expected, when you have abolished the Mass to bring in another service of England's making?

LORD DEPUTY.—Most reverend father, I make no doubt but here be those who will answer your grace, which behoofs them best to answer in this case, as it belongs to their function.

BISHOP OF MEATH.—My lord says well, as your grace was talking of the Mass and the antiquities of it.

ARCHBISHOP.—Is it not ancients than the liturgy now established without the consent of the mother Church?

BISHOP OF MEATH.—No, may it please your grace, for the liturgy established by our gracious King Edward and his English clergy is but the Mass reformed and cleansed from idolatry.

ARCHBISHOP.—We shall fly too high, we suppose, if we continue in this strain. I could wish you would hearken unto reason, and so be united.

BISHOP OF MEATH.—That is my prayer, reverend sir, if you will come to it.

ARCHBISHOP.—The way then to be in unity is not to alter the Mass.

BISHOP OF MEATH.—There is no Church on the face of the whole earth hath altered the Mass more oftener than the

Church of Rome, which hath been the reason that causeth the rationaller sort of men to desire the liturgy to be established in a known tongue, that they may know what additions have been added, and what they pray for.

ARCHBISHOP.—Was not the Mass from the apostles' days ? How can it be proved that the Church of Rome hath altered it ?

BISHOP OF MEATH.—It is easily proved by our records of England. For Coelestinus, Bishop of Rome, in the fourth century after Christ, gave the first Introit of the Mass, which the clergy was to use for preparation ; even the psalm, *Judica me Deus*, etc. ; Rome not owning the word Mass till then.

ARCHBISHOP.—Yes, long before that time ; for there was a Mass called Saint Ambrose's Mass.

BISHOP OF MEATH.—Saint Ambrose was before Coelestinus ; but the two prayers which the Church of Rome had foisted and added unto Saint Ambrose's works are not in his general works ; which hath caused a wise and learned man lately to write that these two prayers were forged, and not to be really Saint Ambrose's.

ARCHBISHOP.—What writer dares write, or doth say so ?

BISHOP OF MEATH.—Erasmus, a man who may well be compared to either of us, or the standers by. Nay, my lord, no disparagement if I say so to yourself ; for he was a wise and judicious man, otherwise I would not have been so bold as to parallel your lordship with him.

LORD DEPUTY.—As for Erasmus's parts, would I were such another ; for his parts may parallel him a companion for a prince.

ARCHBISHOP.—Pray, my lord, do not hinder our discourse ; for I have a question or two to ask Mr. Staples.

LORD DEPUTY.—By all means, reverend father, proceed.

ARCHBISHOP.—Is Erasmus's writings more powerful than the precepts of the mother Church ?

BISHOP OF MEATH.—Not more than the holy Catholic one, yet more than the Church of Rome, as that Church hath run into several errors since Saint Ambrose's days.

ARCHBISHOP.—How hath the Church erred since Saint Ambrose's days ? Take heed lest you be not excommunicated.

BISHOP OF MEATH.—I have excommunicated myself already from thence. Therefore, with Erasmus, I shall aver that the prayers in Saint Ambrose's Mass, especially that to the Blessed Virgin Mary, appears not to be in his ancient works ; for he



had more of the truth and of God's spirit in him than our latter Bishops of Rome ever had, as to pray to the Blessed Virgin as if she had been a goddess.

ARCHBISHOP.—Was she not called blessed? and did she not prophecy of herself, when she was to bear Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, that she would be called by all men blessed?

BISHOP OF MEATH.—Yes, she did so. But others be called blessed, even by Christ Himself. In His first sermon made by Him in the Mount, "Blessed," saith he, "be the meek, be the merciful, be the pure of heart; blessed be those persecuted for righteousness' sake, and those that hunger and thirst after the same;" and He blessed the low minded sort, of which few or none of the Bishops of Rome can be said to be called since Constantine's reign. Christ, also, to all those who shall partake of His heavenly kingdom, will likewise say unto them, "Come, ye blessed of My Father," etc.

ARCHBISHOP.—Why, pray, is it not probable that Saint Ambrose desired the Blessed Virgin's mediation for him, as she is the Mother of Christ? Are not children commanded by God's commandments to reverence and obey their parents? Therefore, as He is a man, why may He not be subject?

BISHOP OF MEATH.—Saint Ambrose knew better that he ought to apply to Jesus, the sole and only Mediator between him and God, and that, as Christ is man, He is the Mediator. If the Blessed Virgin, therefore, can command her Son in heaven to mediate, then Saint Ambrose would have made her a goddess, or a coadjutor with God, who is Himself omnipotent. And lastly, if we make her a mediator as well as Christ, we do not only suspect Christ's insufficiency, but mistrust God's ordinances, thinking ourselves not sure by His promises to us and our forefathers, that Christ should be our Mediator.

ARCHBISHOP to the LORD DEPUTY.—My lord, I signified to your honour that all was in vain, when two parties should meet of a contrary opinion, and that your lordship's pains therein would be lost, for which I am heartily sorry.

LORD DEPUTY.—The sorrow is mine that your grace cannot be convinced.

ARCHBISHOP.—Did your lordship but know the oaths we bishops do take at our consecrations, signed under our hands, you would not blame my steadfastness. This oath, Mr. Staples, you took with others before you were permitted to be consecrated. Consider hereon yourself, and do not blame me for persisting as I do.

BISHOP OF MEATH.—My Lord Deputy, I am not ashamed to declare the oath, and to confess my error in so swearing thereunto. Yet I hold it safer for my conscience to break the same than to observe the same. For when your lordship sees the copy thereof and seriously considers, you will say it is hard for that clergyman so swearing to be a true subject to his King if he observe the same; for that was the oath which our gracious King's royal father caused to be demolished, for to set up another, now called the oath of supremacy, to make the clergy the surer to his royal person, his heirs and successors.

Then the Lord Deputy rose and took leave; so likewise did the Bishops of Meath and Kildare, who waited on his lordship.<sup>4</sup>

In consequence of the Archbishop's obstinacy, the See of Armagh was for a time deprived of the primacy, which was bestowed on Archbishop Browne of Dublin. Archbishop Dowdall himself either fled from the country or was banished, and his place was declared vacant. He continued in exile until the reign of Queen Mary, when he was recalled. Bishop Staples, on the other hand, advanced in favour, and was made a member of the Privy Council. The death of Edward VI., however, brought a reverse in his fortunes. Immediately on the accession of Queen Mary he was deprived of his bishopric, his successor, already selected, sitting in judgment on him. In writing afterwards of that time, he says that he was "made a gesteing stocke amongst munkes and ffreers, nor any cause why was layed agaynst me but for that I did marrie a wif, they did put an Ireyshe monke in my place." He also says that "the Lorde Cardynall Layed Agaynst me for A greueus Article that I presumed in my Sermond to pray for his (our olde Master's) Sole." He was in failing health at the time, and survived only by a short time the accession of Queen Elizabeth.

<sup>4</sup> Mant, *History of the Church of Ireland*.

The new bishop, William Walsh, appointed by Queen Mary, was a Cistercian monk, and had been Prior of Duleek and Rector of Loughsuedy. Probably he was the same as the Welsh whom we have already seen taking part with Silken Thomas. He was an ardent Romanist, and is said to have been one "of great credit amongst his countrymen, and upon whom (as touching causes of religion) they wholly depend." It is, however, doubtful whether he ever had much to do with the administration of the Diocese of Meath. He drew the income, for Queen Mary restored to him the temporalities in 1554, but he had scruples of conscience about being consecrated until he had obtained the Pope's Bull, and he was so busy in the work of depriving bishops, who were not willing to fall in with the new order of things, that he had no time to attend to his consecration. Queen Mary, with all her devotion to Rome, had too much of her father's spirit in her to part easily with royal prerogatives, and as a consequence there was more difficulty in obtaining the Bull than had been anticipated. In 1557, three years after the appointment, the controversy was still going on, and the Queen told the Pope that "by her coronation oath she was bound to maintain the rights of the crown, and the privileges of the kingdom." It is to be presumed that sometime after this, Walsh was consecrated, as we find him subsequently recognized as Bishop of Meath. But no record of his consecration exists. The only actual connection with Meath that we can trace in his story is his appointment by Queen Elizabeth in 1559 as a commissioner for executing martial law in the county.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE REIGN OF QUEEN ELIZABETH.

THE premature death of Queen Mary, and the accession of Elizabeth, was a great blow to the hopes of those who were expecting that all the work of Reformation, begun under the auspices of Edward VI., was soon to be undone. Amongst these one of the foremost was Bishop Walsh. He had taken a leading part in the task of depriving those of the bishops and clergy who favoured the Reformation. He was soon to experience the process of deprivation himself. He refused to take the oath of supremacy, and when, by order of Elizabeth, the Earl of Sussex endeavoured to introduce the Book of Common Prayer into the Irish churches, he openly protested before all the people "that he would never communicate or be present (by his will) where the service should be ministered, for it was against his conscience, and (as he thought) against God's word." He afterwards preached against the Book at Trim, and took such a decided stand that he became at once the leader of the Romanist party. Archbishop Loftus (then of Armagh) wrote of him that "he is one of great credit amongst his countrymen, and upon whom (as touching causes of religion) they wholly depend."<sup>1</sup> In consequence of his recusancy he was put in prison, and shortly afterwards deposed. He remained in custody for some years, and finally, with the connivance of the authorities, escaped to Spain, where he spent the remainder of his days in a Cistercian monastery.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shirley, *Original Letters*.

<sup>2</sup> Ware.

Meanwhile, more energetic efforts than ever before were taken for the establishment of Protestantism in Ireland. First of all, the English liturgy was restored ; this was followed by the re-enactment of the Act of Royal Supremacy ; and at the same Parliament the Act of Uniformity was passed, which enforced the use of the Prayer Book, and inflicted penalties for non-compliance, varying from the loss of a year's income for the first offence, to deprivation and imprisonment for life for the third.

It is necessary here to remark, both with respect to this enactment, and many others of the same class which were subsequently adopted, that it is quite unsafe to draw conclusions as to the state of the country from the provisions of the statute book. These laws were passed, but it is exceedingly hard to say how far they were enforced, or whether the penalties which they provided were ever exacted. There is every reason to believe that they were only partial in their application, and in many places they must have remained for long time a dead letter. Where rich livings tempted the cupidity of eager aspirants they were sometimes put in force, not to aid the work of reformation, but to provide a reward for political services ; but in the ordinary parishes there does not seem to have been even the pretence of applying them.

The one instance of deprivation which we know took place in Meath, is a case in point. On the accession of Queen Elizabeth, Robert Luttrell was Archdeacon of Meath, and Rector of Kells and Kilberry. He had been appointed to the last in 1535, under Henry VIII., by the King's presentation. We cannot say when he was made archdeacon, but it was probably in the time of Edward VI. From his antecedents, therefore, we would not

have expected that he would have found much difficulty in accepting the new regime, but his livings were exceptionally valuable, and, therefore, rigour was employed in his case that was not used elsewhere. It is to be supposed that he joined with the bishop in refusing to use the new Service Book, though we have no particular evidence on this point. At all events, he was deprived in 1559, and John Garvey was put in his place at Kells, while Richard Birmingham succeeded him at Kilberry. Garvey afterwards became Bishop of Kildare, and finally Archbishop of Armagh, but he still continued to be Rector of Kells and Archdeacon of Meath, holding these latter offices *in commendam*. In most other places it is probable that the clergy complied with the orders given, or else that no effort was made to enforce the law.

After Bishop Walsh had been deposed, the See remained vacant for about two years. It was then, in 1563, filled by the appointment of Hugh Brady, who continued to occupy the episcopal seat until 1583. Brady was of an old Irish family, which retained its position in the country after the coming of the English. It is curious to note among his ancestors three who held episcopal rank at a time when the celibacy of the clergy was supposed to have been generally established.<sup>3</sup> He was the great-grandson of John O'Brady, Bishop of Elphin (1405 to 1418), who in turn was son of John, Archbishop of Tuam (1365 to 1372), and he, again, son of John, Archbishop of Cashel. The last of these died in 1345.

Hugh Brady is spoken of by Sir Henry Sydney as an honest, zealous, and learned bishop, a godly minister of the Gospel, and a good servant to the Queen. He was recommended by the Lord Deputy

<sup>3</sup> O'Hart, *Irish Pedigrees*.



as "most fit to succeed to the Archbishopric of Dublin ; his preaching good, his judgment grave, his life exemplary, his hospitality well maintained." He is said also to have been a diligent preacher both in English and in Irish. On the other hand, an English lawyer, Andrew Trollope, writing from Dublin, says, "Anything, almost, will be suffered in Ireland for gain and friendship, or else the Bishop of Meath (an Irishman, and not the best subject in Ireland, . . . and will seem an earnest Protestant, and yet they say cherisheth many a papist) could not have continued one of the Council." It is somewhat amusing, after reading this unfavourable testimony from a lawyer, to find Bishop Brady himself writing that "All the lawyers are thwarters and hinderers of the Reformation."

Brady was in England when his appointment was made, and gives rather a dolorous account of the "troublesome passage" which he had across the Channel in the middle of December, 1563. To begin with, he had to wait nineteen days before the vessel could venture out of harbour, and when it did, it was so tossed by the waves that the condition of the passengers was anything but pleasant. He makes also a complaint, which is often repeated in the Church of England to-day, of the great expenses consequent on an appointment to the episcopacy. Writing to Cecil, he says, "the charges were very great, and will beggar me." The year following he complains again of the expenses of his bishopric, and obtains special letters from the Queen ordering the Irish government to allow him five year's respite for the payment of his first-fruits. At the end of these five years the See of Clonmacnoise was united to that of Meath, and he enjoyed, therefore, a somewhat increased income.

But in the end, he died in debt, and his widow had to petition the Queen to be acquitted of a sum of one hundred and sixty pounds which was still due to the crown.

The following extract from a letter which Bishop Brady addressed to Sir William Cecil shortly after his appointment, show that he found his new dignity to be anything but a bed of roses. He says :

I now by experience find that whereof perhaps I have doubted, that the episcopate is a weight rather than an honour. If I should respect quietness of life and contentation of mind, I had rather be a stipendary priest in England than Bishop of Meath in Ireland. O what a sea of troubles have I entered into ! Storms rising on every side ! The ungodly lawyers are not only sworn enemies to the truth, but also, for lack of due execution of the law, the overthrowers of the country. The ragged clergy are stubborn and ignorantly blind so as there is little hope of their amendment. The simple multitude is through continual ignorance hardly to be won, so that I find myself pressed on every side. . . . For my own diligence I have rather other do speak than myself, and yet thus far I dare presume, by God's help, to do as much good as any other could be sent hither, for a great number of the simple people, and specially where I was born, are greedy hearers, and I trust will be unfeignedly won.

One of the first projects which Brady advocated after his elevation, was the establishment of a university for Ireland. It had already been proposed, in the time of Henry VIII., to abolish Saint Patrick's Cathedral, and apply the revenues for that purpose, and Brady now renewed this proposal, and supported it with all the weight of his influence. An opportunity seemed to present itself when, in 1564, Alexander Craike, Bishop of Kildare, and also Dean of the Cathedral, died. It seemed probable that the authorities were considering the matter, for the deanery was left vacant for some months. In the end,

however, Loftus, Archbishop of Armagh, solicited and obtained the office, which he was allowed to hold along with his archbishopric. Thereupon Brady was very indignant, and wrote to Sir William Cecil as follows :

That I should envy (right honourable) any benefit my Lord Primate, my workfellow, hath, far be it from me, as he was poor, so by such good mean he was to be relieved ; but alas, to continue not only the poverty and misery of an infinite number, which from time to time might have been relieved, but also the general ignorance and barbarous wilfulness of a whole realm to relieve one man, if I durst say it as I think it, was but evil husbandry. When I first heard my Lord Primate was Dean of Saint Patrick's, I would have laid my best gown it was not so ; for, said I, if he might be he would not, and if he would, I thought he could not ; but when I knew that it was so indeed, lord, how my comb was cut. Then began I thus with myself : Is the solemn promise of so noble a prince, made in the presence of so noble personages, come to this ? Is the general assenting and well-liking of the whole Council come to this ? Or is the faithful promise and rejoicing the thing was kept by his own mean to so good a purpose of Mr. Secretary come to this ? Is the careful travail and painful study to the advancing of God's glory of Sir Thomas Wrath come to this ? Finally, is the general thanksgiving of English and Irish, young and old, rich and poor, come to this ? O, unfortunate realm, unworthy of so great a blessing ! O Satan, old enemy of all godly proceeding, how hast thou prevailed in stopping a work so necessary for this poor country, so famous for the prince, so honourable for her councillor's memory ! The one and the other could never by time be forgotten, nor age wear out of memory.

There is a good deal more in the same strain, which, it will be noted, is not that of an ordinary letter, but suggests rather the style of a declamatory orator. Brady was famous in his day as a preacher, and we can scarcely wonder at it, if his sermons abounded in rounded periods and passionate exclamations such as these.



In 1566 the Archbishopric of Dublin became vacant by the translation of Hugh Curwen to the See of Oxford. It appeared likely at first that Bishop Brady would succeed to that dignity. Sir Henry Sidney, as we have already mentioned, wrote in his favour, and at the same time suggested that he should be succeeded in Meath by Archbishop Loftus, "who, I suppose, would thankfully receive the exchange, and willingly embase his estate to increase so much his revenue." Loftus, as Sidney had expected, was quite willing to fall in with the proposal and expressed his opinion that there was none fitter for the archbishopric than the Bishop of Meath. After a time, however, Loftus began to think that he might himself possibly obtain the See of Dublin, and his opinion of the Bishop of Meath thereupon underwent a change. He lost no time in writing to Sir William Cecil on the subject, not indeed to urge his own claims, but to show how important it was that a good appointment should be made. "I understand," he says, "that the Bishop of Meath is in some towardness to it, and indeed he hath had (I am the more sorry) my simple commendation. If he have any forwardness in it, then, if it would please your honour to pause a while, I could show such matter as I would (God is my witness), except it were for the Church of God's sake, be loth to utter by any means, but least of all by writing, upon the knowledge whereof, the matter I know should go no further." The deep offence which is thus so darkly hinted turns out to be that Brady had given the primate small assistance in executing his commission for causes ecclesiastical, and the former, on his part, appeals to Cecil "to stop one of your ears till either I answer for myself, or a number of his countrymen and mine both may report the truth between him and

me. If he say I have drawn backward, I only say again he hath drawn too fast forward." <sup>4</sup>

When Loftus had gained the coveted prize, his good opinion of his episcopal brother revived, and he cheerfully joined with the Privy Council in testifying "to the sufficiency of Hugh, Bishop of Meath, in the function of the office pastoral, and his earnest and careful setting forth of her Majesty's godly proceedings, and sincere preaching God's most holy Gospel, as well in the English as in the Irish tongue, upon the confines here, to the right good edifying of many of the ruder sort, and no less alluring of the residue." <sup>5</sup> Thus ended this not very creditable episode. Loftus obtained the spoil, and Brady continued to be Bishop of Meath to the end of his days.

The state of the diocese under Bishop Brady does not seem to have been very prosperous. He speaks of the clergy as being in a state of beggary. He tells Lord Justice Pelham that "some one of her Majesty's farmers of parsonages impropriate near Trim, hath sixteen benefices in his hands, and amongst those not one vicar or minister maintained that can read English or understand Latin, or give any good instruction to his parishioners." Commissioners were appointed in 1577 to look after ecclesiastical matters, and they report among others things that "the bishops had admitted to livings boys, kearne, laymen, and other incapable persons." They instance George Cusack, a lay serving man, usurper of Kentstown; Lucas Plunket, prentice to a vintner in Dublin, who had Killavy, a parish of which the Baron of Slane was patron; Robert Nugent, a horseman of the Baron of Delvin's retinue, who held Galtrim; and John Barnewall, a young boy of Dublin, who had Kilmessan.

<sup>4</sup> Shirley's *Original Letters*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

These were all deprived by the Commissioners. It is hard to say who was responsible for such appointments, but whoever was to blame, the fact remains the same, and bears painful testimony to the degradation of the Church in that disordered age.

The following extract from a letter written by Sir Henry Sydney to the Queen, in 1576, has often been quoted, but cannot here be omitted, as it throws so much light on the state of the diocese at the time. He says :

And now, most dear Mistress and most honoured Sovereign, I solely address to you, as to the only sovereign salve-giver to this your sore and sick realm, the lamentable estate of the most noble and principal limb thereof—the Church, I mean—as foul, deformed, and as cruelly crushed as any other part thereof ; by your only gracious and religious order to be cured, or at least amended. I would not have believed, had I not for a great part viewed the same throughout the whole realm, and was advertised of the particular estate of the Church in the Bishopric of Meath (being the best inhabited country of all this realm) by the honest, zealous and learned bishop of the same, Mr. Hugh Bradye, a godly minister for the Gospel, and a good servant to your Highness, who went from church to church himself, and found that there are within his diocese 224 parish churches, of which number 105 are impropriated to sundry possessions now of your Highness, and all leased out for years or in fee farm to several fermors, and great gain reaped out of them above the rent which your Majesty receiveth. No parson or vicar resident upon any of them, and a very simple or sorry curate for the most part appointed to serve therein. Among which number of curates, only eighteen were found able to speak English ; the rest, Irish priests, or rather Irish rogues, having very little Latin, less learning and civility. All these live upon the bare alterages, as they term them, (which, God knoweth, are very small), and were wont to live upon the gain of masses, dirges, shrivings, and such like trumpery, godly abolished by your Majesty. No one house standing for any of them to dwell in. In many places the very walls of the churches down, very few chancels covered, windows and doors ruined and spoiled. There are 52 other



parish churches in the same diocese who have vicars endowed upon them, better maintained and served than the other, yet but badly. There are 52 parish churches more, residue of the first number of 224, which pertain to divers particular lords. And these, though in better estate than the rest, commonly are yet far from well. If this be the estate of the churches in the best peopled diocese and best governed country of your realm (as in troth it is), easy it is for your Majesty to conjecture in what case the rest is, where little or no reformation, either of religion or manners, hath yet been planted and continued among them. . . . Your Majesty may believe it, that upon the face of the earth, where Christ is professed, there is not a church in so miserable a case. The misery of which consisteth in these three particulars—1. The ruin of the very temples themselves; 2. The want of good ministers to serve in them when they shall be re-edified; 3. Competent living for the ministers, being well chosen.<sup>6</sup>

The picture thus presented of the Diocese of Meath in the seventeenth year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, is not a pleasant one, and it shows how the progress of the Reformation was hindered by what seems like a want of common sense on the part of the rulers of the land. It contains some points on which we would gladly have more information. With regard to the hundred and five parishes, for instance, in which the clergymen were "Irish priests or rather Irish rogues," we may well ask, whence did they derive their orders? Clearly not from Bishop Brady, nor indeed, I think we may conclude, from any other Bishop of Meath. It would appear that the impropiators of these parishes obtained curates wherever they could find them, and put them in charge without any respect to episcopal control. Yet the impropiators were, as a body, altogether in the power of the government. They held the church property under leases which were generally for a short term, and they could be dispossessed on the termination of this period, or else new covenants could be introduced.

<sup>6</sup> *State Papers.*

It would seem then that the weakness in the ecclesiastical administration was only part of that general weakness which must have characterized every department of the government of the country.

It is only fair to add that there is another side to this picture. When we come to examine this account more closely—though no doubt it is bad enough—yet it is by no means as bad as it appears at first sight. The population at that time was very much smaller than it is at present, and hence we may fairly conclude that if all the two hundred and twenty-four parish churches were in good repair, and with efficient clergymen ministering in each of them, there would not be two hundred and twenty-four congregations found in Meath to occupy all these churches. In the present arrangement of the diocese we have ninety-three churches (omitting those in the Diocese of Clonmacnoise). I believe that our present supply, as far as the number of buildings is concerned, would be found ample, even if the whole population of the country were to attend the administrations of our Church. The Roman Catholics have in Meath sixty-seven parishes, and allowing that in many of these there are chapels of ease, it would appear that the number of their churches is probably not greater than that of ours. We may, therefore, conclude that one hundred churches would be amply sufficient for the spiritual wants of the diocese; and, according to Bishop Brady, there were at least one hundred and four, which were served moderately well: fifty-two “which have vicars endowed upon them, better served and maintained than the other, yet but badly;” and fifty-two “in better estate than the rest.” Some of these must have been fine buildings, capable of accommodating large congregations. The remains of

the old churches at Duleek, Trim, Athboy, Rathmore, Kells, and elsewhere, show that alike in architectural beauty, and in size, they often far surpassed the buildings of more modern date.

Nor was the work of conservation altogether neglected. On the belfry of Kells, which was formerly the central tower of the church, there is an inscription which reads as follows :—

The body of this church being in utter ruin and decay was re-edified in Anno Domini, 1578, et in anno rr. Elizabeth xx., through the diligence and care of the Reverend Father in God, Hughe Brady, Bishop of Meath, and Sir Johannes Garvie, Archdeacon of the same and Dean of Christ Church in Dublin, both of Her Majesty's Privy Council; Sir Henry Sidnie, Knight of the Noble Order, being then Lord Deputy, &c. The said re-edifying was begun and set forward by the advice and daily careful travail of the ancient burgess Nicholas D., then being Sovereign of Kenlis, 2nd July; anno predicto, with other daily furtherance, bought the roof of this church upon his own proper charges. God is not unright that He should forget the work and labour that proceedeth, which love is showed for His Name's sake.

Kells is one of the parishes where we would have expected to find matters at a low ebb, for the rector was non-resident, and with his deanery and membership of the Privy Council, can have had little time to bestow on the care of his parish. We would have no record of this work of re-edification if this curious inscription had not been preserved. We may, therefore, reasonably think that this was not an exceptional case but that the "diligence and care" of the bishop caused many a church to be repaired, of which we have now no knowledge.

One of the chief causes of the disordered state of the diocese at this time is not mentioned by Sydney. It was the unsettled state of the country, and the



depredations committed by Shane O'Neill. The story of O'Neill's rebellion need not be repeated here, as its incidents belong mostly to other parts of the country. He, however, attacked the district of Meath more than once, and devastated a considerable portion of the county. In some of the negotiations with him, Garvey, who has been already mentioned as Arch-deacon of Meath and Rector of Kells, was one of the intermediaries appointed to confer with the rebel chieftain. On one occasion, also, the Bishop of Meath himself had to muster the forces to repel an expected invasion, and we learn that he repaired with the troops to Moynalty, for the purpose of defending the district. When duties such as these fell to the lot of ecclesiastics, we can scarcely wonder that more spiritual concerns were at times forgotten.

Bishop Brady died on the thirteenth of February, 1583, at Dunboyne, the place of his birth, and he was buried there in the Parish Church. The year following, Thomas Jones was appointed, and he continued in the See during the remainder of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and till the year 1605, at which date he was translated to Dublin.

Jones was an Englishman by birth, but had spent some years in Ireland, where he had married the sister-in-law of Archbishop Loftus. At an early age he was elected to the Deanery of Saint Patrick's, Dublin, and in the same year, (1581), we have him officiating at the execution of three gentlemen who were to put death on a charge of treason, his office being to endeavour to bring them to a better state of mind before leaving this world. He was not very successful in his persuasion, for the culprits only answered to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan;" one of them adding, "Is it not enough for you to have

our lives, but that you must also seek to draw us from our religion?" Three years later, he was advanced to the Bishopric of Meath, and in that position showed himself to be a zealous Protestant, though it may be doubted whether his discretion was at all times equal to his zeal.

A curious incident, which throws some light on the bishop's character, is given to us in the State Papers of the time. There is, first of all, a letter from Sir Nicholas White, Master of the Rolls, to Lord Burghley, in which he complains of being preached at by the Bishop of Meath. He says, "Pardon my earnestness against these public expressions of a young prelate, whose years, in common judgment, serve better to con a sermon than to discern what may follow at this time in this land. This kind of proceeding breeds wishes in some that he had been spared till riper years, or that we, whose experience seems little in his sight, were better used, or left to a private life." The circumstances which gave rise to this complaint are detailed in a letter written by the Archbishop of Armagh at about the same time. He tells that at the Privy Council Sir Nicholas White advocated "to use tolerance in the matter of oath and religion," and urged that "instruction was more necessary than severity, in order to draw them in matters of policy to good conformity." The Bishop of Meath strongly opposed all such suggestions, and immediately afterwards, "in open pulpit, took occasion to stir this controversy, whether magistrates may tolerate with papists, for so he thinketh of them (as appeareth by his words) as idolaters, papists, and infidels." Sometime previously, a clergyman named Powell had preached that "princes might tolerate with idolatry, for the strength of the realm, and the increase of God's Church,

so that they are not permitted publicly to commit idolatry nor infect others, and had instructors provided for them." It was understood too that the Archbishop of Armagh favoured the same views. Bishop Jones would have no such compromise with error, and attacked the upholders of these opinions, whom he regarded as lukewarm Protestants. He first of all flatly affirmed that it was the duty of magistrates to root out the papists, "for that they will be pricks in their eyes, thorns in their sides, and whips to their backs." Then he "privately digressed," to tax the governor with lax administration of the law, and for having too much familiarity or trust with councillors not well affected in religion. He went on to attack Mr. Powell, whom he characterized as a "maintainer of idolatry," and though he did not venture openly to attack the Primate, yet, says the Archbishop, "he glanced at me with unseemly words." The chief point in his sermon was "that Christian princes must root out idolatry, and not join in an unequal yoke with infidels." The Primate, as we may well believe, altogether disapproved of the tone of these remarks. The sermon, he said, will breed contempt for preaching ; it will give people an excuse for staying away from church ; it will lay our imperfections and nakedness too open ; it is "making mountains out of molehills, and opening every scar in us to find out wounds, albeit they were sufficiently healed before."

If Bishop Jones governed his diocese on the principles enunciated in this sermon, he would soon have made short work of the "Irish priests," which were tolerated, though not approved of, by his predecessor. It would appear, however, that his language was stronger than his acts, or else that a short residence in Ireland infected him with that same



desire to let things take their course without undue interference, which has characterized so many of our English rulers at all times. However, we may explain it, the fact remains that in 1600 every charge is brought against him that in 1586 he had brought against the rulers of the country at that time. These charges are embodied in a document entitled, "Certain instructions conceived by the Queen's Majesty to be imparted to her Deputy and Council in Ireland," which was issued in the former year. If the statements in this letter are to be relied on, Meath was never in a more deplorable state than at that time. The following are extracts :—

Forasmuch as her Majesty is credibly informed that the most part of the churches within the two large dioceses of Dublin and Meath are utterly ruined, insomuch as, between Dublin and Athlone, which containeth sixty miles, and is the through tract of the English Pale, there are so few churches standing as they will scarcely make a plural number, and so few pastors to teach or preach the Word, as in most of them there is not so much as a reading minister; that the Lord Deputy do call before him and some other of the best of the Council, the Lords Archbishop of Dublin and Bishop of Meath, to know of them the causes of these ruins of churches in their several dioceses, and to charge them under pain of her Majesty's uttermost displeasure, to assemble their clergy, and take order out of hand for repairing of their churches, and to see them furnished with pastors, at least with reading ministers, to instruct the people upon the Sabbath days, who not having churches nor ministers, do meet together on hills, and there spend the time in wicked devices which should be spent in the service and worship of God.

That the Lord Deputy let these two bishops know how greatly her Majesty is offended with them for their remiss and unchristianlike carriage in their spiritual callings, whereby idolatry is grown to that height as it is the very strength and heart of the rebellion, and Jesuits and other Rome-running priests do so swarm, both in cities and country, within the realm, who for due want of looking to in time, have got

such an awe over the people that the poor subjects (who otherwise are sound in their loyalty) dare not but yield to those Romish priests in matters of conscience and faith. . . .

Likewise in the Diocese of Meath, which is the heart of the English Pale, there is suffered to stand untouched a house of friars, named Multifarnham, the only place of assembly and conventicle of all the traitorous Jesuits of the realm, and where was the first conspiracy and plotting of this great rebellion. This of all the rest is most lamentable and worthy of reprehension in the bishop, for that the friars and all other Popish adversaries to her Majesty's government have their recourse and passage to and fro thither, in as open and public manner as if their idolatrous profession were justified by the authority of the clergy. That the Lord Deputy charge the Bishop of Meath in her Majesty's name to see how this house may be demolished, or at least the friars expelled, and the house converted to a place of garrison, or some other good use, and that the said bishop be charged to give over his former profane manner of life, and to give himself more to preaching, and travailing in the ways of his calling, to reform his diocese, which is wholly fallen away from God for want of good instruction; and by these tolerances of idolatry the wrath of God is kindled against the whole realm, and will more and more increase, till her Majesty shall draw her clergy to a more feeling of their duty to God and her, and to a more Christian-like care to lead her people in the ways of truth and loyalty.<sup>7</sup>

Bishop Jones wrote shortly after this a letter to Sir Robert Cecil, justifying himself, which is, a kind of reply to these accusations. It is stronger in general assertions than in any specific denial of the truth of the charges. We may, therefore, I fear, conclude, that there was some truth at all events, in what was said. The bishop writes :—

The remembrance of such information as I hear are presented to her most excellent Majesty and their lordships against me (in regard the offences are so heinous which are laid to my charge) doth in some sort discourage me from writing to your honour, but the knowledge that I have of your honour's disposition, and the testimony which I carry of a clear conscience

in these injurious imputations, embolden me at this present to trouble you with this letter ; wherein I see just cause to bewail my hard condition above the rest of this Council, who living here in a place of daily danger, subject to the incursions of the rebels, and yet continuing my zealous services to her Majesty, by the malice of some wicked detractor have been made the mark whereat he hath aimed, to steal from me the favour of my soveriegn and the good opinion of their lordships, the only recompense I did expect and hope for of all my endeavours. And so much more grievous is my case, in that I see myself, as it were, overborne with untruths and overladen with such crimes as if they should prove true (as God forbid), instead of a bishop and of a privy councillor, which places I hold by Her Majesty's grace, I might justly be counted an irreligious creature in the presence of God, and an unworthy varlet in the judgment of my prince. In consideration of such imputations, I protest unto your honour I stand amazed and astonished at the impudence of the informer whoever he was, that howsoever his malice towards myself did not restrain him from charging me wrongfully with these shameless untruths, yet the regard of the excellency of her Highness' sacred person, representing on earth the majesty of the Eternal God, nor respect to their lordship's authority, did bridle him from using this unseemly office. I humbly crave your honour's pardon for using this vehemency, remembering how deeply my conscience, credit and reputation are touched. For a bishop of her Majesty's creation to maintain a friary for particular profit, against his knowledge, conscience, and profession, I hold it an offence, impious and abominable before God, and worthy of detestation in all good men. And for a bishop so far to neglect or forget his calling as not to show himself careful to see his churches repaired, is an offence that betrayeth atheism rather than Christianity. In the first of these imputations I call God and His angels to witness with my conscience that I am altogether innocent. And for the second, although I have not been thoroughly so careful as I should, yet I have not been in any measure so careless as is informed. I pawn my credit with your honour for the justification of my answer now sent to their lordships ; and besides, for your lordship's particular satisfaction, do send unto you the enclosed particular note, under my hand and my register's, of the several churches within my diocese which (so far as my remembrance of this sudden can reach) are at this instant in good reparation. And I do promise your honour that I will be more careful in this



behalf. . . . I might inform your honour how that some churches upon this border, as mine own church of Ardraccan, of Kells, Clongell, and other places, where garrisons have been placed in the winters past, are decayed, and in a manner quite pulled down by the soldiers, but in regard I have taken order for the rebuilding of them in a convenient time, I will not trouble you with excuses. But now, I do appeal to your honour's censure, how injuriously I have been dealt with by this informer, who hath sought thus maliciously to work my disgrace. . . . If this my letter do satisfy your honour then my humble suit unto your honour is to vouchsafe me this favour, to be a mean to satisfy her Highness, that I may recover her Majesty's good opinion, which by my faithful services, I have and still will endeavour to deserve, and without the which I do not desire to live.

The bishop encloses with this letter "a note of such churches and chancels within the Diocese of Meath, as are at this instant in good reparation, most of them being in East Meath." He enumerates seventy-nine such churches, and adds, "that divers others churches in my diocese are in good reparation for the bodies of the churches, the chancels are in decay, being inappropriate." It will be remembered that his predecessor, Bishop Brady, had counted up one hundred and four churches in repair, and that this was considered to be a lamentable state of affairs. It is quite manifest that things had not been prospering in the meantime. At the same time we need not blame the bishop too much. He was neither the first nor the last of those Englishmen who came over to Ireland full of confidence in themselves and their methods, but who found themselves doomed to disappointment.

## CHAPTER XV.

### BISHOP JONES'S "CERTIFICATE OF THE DIOCESE OF MEATH."

THE political condition of Ireland towards the close of the sixteenth century, when the reign of Queen Elizabeth was drawing to a close, was as bad as it could well be. There was disaffection in all parts of the country, the action of the Government was weak and vacillating, and the forces of the crown seemed to be quite inadequate to deal with the difficulties of the time. In the North of Ireland the standard of rebellion had been raised by the Earl of Tyrone, who came of a stock that had given the English trouble for many years. The insurrection was given the character of a religious war, from the fact that it was under the patronage of the Church of Rome—the Pope's legate, as well as Edmund Gallaher, Roman Catholic Bishop of Derry, going about with Tyrone, and counselling him in all his enterprises. Meath had its share in their unwelcome attentions, and on more than one occasion was visited by them with fire and slaughter. Bishop Jones, who, according to the fashion of the age, was a politician as well as an ecclesiastic, took, at that time, a leading part in the government of the country. He negotiated with the rebels, sent advice as to how they should be treated, and when Tyrone issued a manifesto, which is described by Lord Justice Carey as "a traitrous and villainous

libel," he undertook to draw up a refutation of its statements, deeming it of the greatest importance that such a document should not be read by the common people without an antidote being at the same time provided. He complained that he himself had suffered by the depredations of the insurgents, and tells how, in 1597, the rebels under Tyrone had made desolate a lordship belonging to his bishopric, which was wont to yield him a yearly rent of one hundred pounds, besides customs and provisions, wherein there was not a tenant left.<sup>1</sup>

Connected with this movement was an incursion made into Meath from the adjoining district of Breffny, in the County Cavan, by Philip O'Reilly, followed by the clans of the O'Reillys and MacMahons. In 1596, Bishop Jones writes to the Lord Deputy, telling him that an incursion was imminent, and that some of the Queen's soldiers had been drawn into the confederacy. The forces at the disposal of the loyalists were quite inadequate, for they had only the garrison of Kells to look to for protection, and the sovereign of that town was "but a simple man," while Captain Street, who was in command of the soldiers, had only fifty men, of whom but ten were English, and the rest only "the reversions of horse-boys in this ticklish time."

A little later in the same year, he reports that the attack which he had predicted had actually taken place. Two hundred "rebels of the Brenny" (that is, of Breffny) were at about six in the morning "spoiling in East Meath," within five or six miles of the bishop's own house at Ardbraccan. Four days after this he writes again to the Lord Deputy, and tells him that

<sup>1</sup> The information in this chapter is nearly all derived from the *State Papers* of the time.



"the O'Reillys and Duffs came to Dunmow, a village seated upon the Boyne side, and took from it one hundred cows or thereabouts, unyoked the garrans out of the ploughs, and carried them with them. Thence they went to the Granges, a village adjoining, and belonging to Nicholas Birford, and in revenge for his late good service, have taken all the cattle and goods that he had, killed one of his men, dangerously injured another, and burned his house. All this was done within two miles of the Navan, before the setting of the sun. Every night some spoil is committed, and unless present order be taken for guarding that border, I do not think that any man dwelling on that side of the Boyne who is not of Philip's confederacy will possess any goods."

Shortly after this Philip O'Reilly was killed in one of the forays, and the bishop urges that "a small force, now sent to the borders, would for ever recover the Brenny," But little or no response was made to this appeal, and the following year saw the O'Reillys once more in the field, making an incursion "to prey the Pale towards Kells." The soldiers of the queen, under the sheriff of Meath, who had forty horsemen, and one hundred foot, together with the garrison of Kells, now increased to one hundred men, went forth to meet the rebels, but were badly beaten. As soon as they came in sight of the foe, the horsemen "fled presently," and overran their own footmen, so that all was in confusion; and when the fight was over, it was found that the commanding officer was killed, together with his ensign and serjeant, his lieutenant was mortally wounded, another officer was taken prisoner, and fifty of the company were slain.

According to Archbishop Loftus, a great portion of Meath—(he mentions the baronies of Kells, Slane,

Morgallion, Navan, and a part of the Barony of Fore) —was “quite wasted” by these incursions. But he complains also that “Meath is oppressed by the soldiers in the thoroughfare, both of horse and foot, especially by the troupe of the Lord President and his horsemen, who commit very grievous extortions and oppressions.” And about the same time a petition was drawn up by the inhabitants of Meath, and presented to the Lords Justices and Council of Ireland, complaining of the burdens imposed upon them for the supply of the garrisons of Navan, Trim, Ratoath, Dunboyne, Kells, and Athboy. Thus both her friends and enemies were alike destructive, and Meath had to suffer from the rebels who devastated her lands, and at the same time from the soldiers who were supposed to protect her.

This was the state of the diocese, or at all events of the eastern portion of it, when Queen Elizabeth died, and it can be well understood how little it lent itself to the prosperity of the Church. On the accession of King James, there were proposals for the amelioration of the condition of the country. If proposals and projects could have effected the regeneration of a land, then the Irish problem would long ago have been solved, for surely no other country has had so many proposals concerning it put forward from time to time. The pity is that so many of them were never carried out, and that so many others were merely attempted, and then relinquished. Early in 1604 the Lords of the Council drew up a document entitled, “Memorials for the better Reformation of the Kingdom of Ireland.” It is of considerable length, and deals with a great variety of subjects, recommending a number of reforms which the memorialists deem necessary for the government of the country. The first two paragraphs are :—

Imprimis. That a learned ministry be planted, and the abuses of all the clergy be reformed.

That all titular bishops, Jesuits, seminaries, friars, and Romish priests be banished the realm, except that they will reform them selves, and that none do receive or succour them upon great pain of imprisonment, without bail, and fines to be imposed upon them, as shall be thought meet.

In response to this memorial some enquiries were made, and an answer was drawn up by the Deputy and Council of Ireland. It was evidently intended to send with their letter a detailed description of the ecclesiastical condition of the whole country. Only the Diocese of Dublin and Meath, however, are described—a fact which is not without its significance. As the length is not inordinate, it may perhaps interest the reader if the document, with the description of Meath, be given in full.

DEPUTY AND COUNCIL OF IRELAND TO THE LORDS, IN ANSWER  
TO THEIR LETTERS OF 25TH JANUARY, FOR A LEARNED  
MINISTRY TO BE PLANTED IN IRELAND.

In answer to the Lords of the Council's letter of the 24th of January last, conveying the King's desire to have a zealous and learned ministry planted here, they have called before them the best affected of the bishops of this land, and sundry other both godly and zealous ministers ; as namely, besides us, the Lord Chancellor and Lord of Meath, the Lord Primate, the Bishops of Kilmore and Ferns, the Deans of Christchurch, St. Patrick's, Lymerick, and Cork, Mr. Doctor Challoner, Mr. Philip Worth, and others that might with best convenience be got together. With them they have conferred, and out of their opinions have collected sundry briefs, which they present to the Lords, together with some certificates of the Bishops, of the value of the Church livings, with the name of the incumbent and donator, which they have declared on their credits to be true. And for the planting of a learned ministry in this land, they conceive it most requisite, first, that there be a supplantation of the swarms of titular bishops, seminaries, Jesuits, priests and friars ; for except they be banished and



their relievers punished, it will be hard to plant a learned ministry, the people are so carried away with the enticements of this rabble. This (in the opinion of the Lord Deputy and Council) may easily be effected while his Majesty's army continues at this strength, especially in the English Pale, and the civil countries that are under good government.

After this follows a "certificate" of the Diocese of Dublin, and this is followed by a

#### CERTIFICATE OF THE DIOCESE OF MEATH.

A Catalogue of certain Ecclesiastical Livings, Rectories and Vicarages, in the Diocese of Meath, which do amount to or exceed the yearly value of £30 sterling, together with the Names of the several Incumbents of the same, how they are qualified, and of what sufficiency they be; and also of the Patrons of the several Livings.

Memorandum.—In this Diocese of Meath there is not as in other dioceses, a Cathedral Church, but in this diocese we bear the name of a Bishop and his Clergy, and so it hath been since the first erection of this bishopric.

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The Archdeaconry of Meath, a living seated upon this border, near to the town of Kells, is by these late broils in value damaged, yet I do value it at this instant at 200 [marks per ann. To this dignity pertain the rectory of Kells with three other parishes next adjoining. Mr. Owen Wood, one of Her late Majesty's chaplains, is incumbent, and under him and Patrick Barnewall, receive the yearly profits, but between them, there is neither care taken of the service of the church, nor of upholding the repair of the chancels, and therefore the fruits are in sequestration. The Bishop of Meath is patron, but Mr. Woods was presented by an advowson granted by my predecessor and confirmed by the clergy.

The rectory of Trym, with four churches annexed to it, hath likewise sustained some decay in this rebellion, but is worth per ann. about £150 sterling. Incumbent, Mr. Robert Draper,<sup>2</sup> an ancient master of arts, a learned preacher, and a

<sup>2</sup> Robert Draper was also Bishop of Kilmore, and on account of the poverty of his See, was given the Parish of Trim to hold *in commendam* with his bishopric.

good keeper of hospitality, still resident upon his living. The Bishop of Meath is patron.

The rectory of Rathfeigh, valet per ann. £40 sterling. Incumbent, Mr. Godfrey Loftus, a university man, a minister and a preacher. Mr. Bath of Rathfeighe, patron.

The rectory of Kilmore, valet per ann. £35. The son of Mr. Loftus also holds this living, seated within two miles of the other, by dispensation, and in this living resides and keeps good hospitality. Patron, the Lord Primate of Armagh.

The vicarage of Stamullen. Incumbent, Mr. Whitehorn, an honest English minister, resident. Patron, Sir Garrett Moore.

The rectory of Kentstown, valet per ann. £40 sterling. Incumbent, Mr. Luke Usher, a university man and a minister. The Lord of Dunsany, patron.

The rectory of Ballygarth, valet per ann. £65 sterling. Incumbent, John Derbishire, a graduate in the university, a minister and a preacher. Mr. Netterville of Dowth is patron, but this incumbent was presented to me by a lapse.

The rectory of Paynstown, valet per ann. £50 sterling. Incumbent, Gilbert Purdon, an English minister, of long continuance. Mr. De la Field of Paynstown, patron.

The vicarage of Ratowth, valet per ann. £40 sterling. Incumbent, Nicholas Smith, graduate in the college near Dublin, and a minister, able to teach. The King's Majesty, patron.

The vicarage of Rabegan, valet per ann. £35 sterling. Incumbent, one Kevan, a reading minister, born there, of honest reputation. Patron, Sir Garrett Moore.

The rectory of Kilbrew, valet per annum £35. Incumbent, Mr. Hubertstie, a master of art, a minister, and a good preacher. Patron, Mr. Barnewell of Kilbrew, but this incumbent was presented to me by a lapse.

The rectory of Agher is now somewhat wasted, but in time of peace valet at £35 per ann. Incumbent, Thomas Tedder, a university scholar, minister and preacher, living in Dublin. The King's Majesty, patron.

The vicarage of Galtrim, valet per ann. £32 sterling. Incumbent, Nicholas Dalie, an honest minister of this country birth, able to preach in the Irish tongue. Patron, Mr. Hussie, Baron of Galtrim.

The vicarage of Skryne, valet per ann. £33; it is a good house for a preacher. Incumbent, one Whitbread, an aged

English minister of 70 years, resident. The King's Majesty patron.

The vicarage of Killeene, valet per ann. £40. Incumbent, Arthur Book, an English minister, resident. The Lord of Killeene patron.

The vicarage of Athboy, valet per ann. £35. Incumbent, David Jones, a master of arts, a minister and a good preacher, resident. Patron, the Primate of Armagh.

The rectory of Rathmoore, valet per ann. £40. Incumbent, Willbryan Fox, a minister of this country birth, resident. Patron, Mr. Plunkett of Rathmore.

The rectory of Kilskyre, valet per ann. £40 ; and the rectory of Killalon, valet per ann. £35. These two livings are possessed by Richard Lindson, a graduate in the university (a minister resident, well able to teach) by dispensation, in regard these livings are near together, viz., within two miles. Patron of Kilskyre, Mr. Plunkett of Rathmore ; of Killalon, the Lord of Killeene.

The rectory of Moynalth, bordering upon Brenny and Ferny, in time of peace, valet at £50 per ann., now at £30 per ann. Incumbent, John Carie, student in the college near Dublin, allowed by dispensation. The Lord of Slane, patron.

The rectory of Slane, valet per ann. £40. Incumbent, Thomas White, born in Meath, a minister, and able to teach both in English and Irish. Patron, the Lord of Slane.

The rectory of Killery, in time of peace valued at £50, now at £20. Incumbent, Richard White, minister, of this country birth, able to teach in Irish. Patron, Everhard of Randelstown.

The rectory of Clongill, valet per ann. £33 sterling. The same man is also incumbent of this rectory ; to the former he is resident. Patron, the Bishop of Meath.

The rectory of Stacallen, valet per ann. £30 sterling. Incumbent, Edward Southerne, an English minister and preacher, residing for his safety at the Navan by my appointment. Mr. Barnewell of Crykeston, patron.

The rectory of Rathwire, valet per ann. £120 sterling. Incumbent, Henry Luttrell, a minister of this country. The old Countess of Kildare is patron, and fermor of this rectory for a little.

The vicarage of Rathwire, valet per ann. £40. Incumbent, Mr. Robinson, an English minister and preacher, living at Dublin. The said countess is also patron of this vicarage.



The rectory of Multifernam in Westmeath. Incumbent, Gilbert Purdon, an English minister. Patron, Richard Nugent of Donore, gent.

The rectory of Rathconert, valet per ann. £40 sterling. Tybolt Dalton, born there, incumbent, and resident there these 30 years. The chief of the Daltons, patron.

The vicarage of Mullingar, valebat ad £40, nunc ad £20. Incumbent, one Dalton, a reading minister, resident. Pettit of Irishton, patron.

The vicarage of Athlone is near in value to £30 per ann. Incumbent, David Malone an aged minister, at the age of 80 years, born there, resident. Patron, the Bishop of Meath.

The vicarage of Fercall, valued at time of peace £50, now at £10. Incumbent, Mr. Charles Odur, professor of the civil law. The King's Majesty, patron.

The vicarage of Ardnurcher, in time of peace valued at £50, now in a manner it is quite waste. No incumbent. The King's Majesty, patron.

There are besides in the Diocese of Meath about 30 or 40 other vicarages and rectories, some few of 40 marks, some of £20, and some of 20 marks or £10 yearly value, filled, especially in East Meath, by English-reading ministers, and some of the country birth, born in the Pale, which shall be compelled to do some good in their churches. But the greatest number of churches in the Diocese of Meath (about 120) belonged to the suppressed abbeys and religious houses and so the tithes are come to His Majesty's hands and are for the most part granted to Papists by lease for years, or in fee farm, who place curates of their own choosing, without sufficient maintenance; neither do they keep in repair (as they are bound by their estates) the chancels of their churches, which is a thing the Bishop cannot remedy, being debarred to sequester the fruits of their impropriate parsonages.

Signed,

THO : MIDDENSIS.

This document speaks for itself, and tells how much the Church suffered from the unsettled state of the country. Again the question arises concerning those curates who were presented by Roman Catholic impropiators, as to where they obtained their Orders,

and none of the manuscripts at our disposal gives us any information. They could scarcely have been ordained by bishops belonging to the Establishment, for it is clear that the bishops most strongly objected to them. But if not, there is only one other alternative, and that is to conclude that through the whole reign of Elizabeth, many—we may even say, most—of the Irish clergy must have obtained their orders from the titular bishops sent to Ireland by the Pope, whose presence in the country was all the time contrary to the law ; and that the fact of the law being evaded in this wholesale way must have been well known to all who were in authority. Men so ordained would, it may be supposed, take the oath of allegiance if necessary, though we can only surmise that any attempt was made to impose it on them ; but even if they did, they would in all other respects be Roman priests, opposed in every way to the work of Reformation. It was with men such as these that the majority of the parishes were filled, and yet our English rulers seem to have expected that the Reformation would make headway in Ireland.

Shortly after this document was issued, the office of Lord Chancellor of Ireland, together with that of the Archbishopric of Dublin, became vacant by the death of Archbishop Loftus. Bishop Jones immediately wrote to the Earl of Salisbury, asking for his influence towards obtaining these two offices. In this letter he disclaims the idea that he was actuated by any ambitious motive. He says that he wrote “out of the advice of some of his friends here, rather than from any ambition in himself.” His inclinations were manifestly those of a statesman rather than of a prelate, for he declares that he only desired the Archbishopric “for the convenience of living nearer

the State, to answer the Office of the Chancellor," and he goes on to say that if he is not made Chancellor, he would rather remain as Bishop of Meath, than be promoted to the greater dignity in the Church.

He obtained these two offices shortly afterwards, and thus his connection with Meath came to an end. He wrote a letter of thanks to Lord Salisbury, acknowledging that it was his favour that had been the chief means of his preferment, and he adds, "They are now beginning to seek some reformation in the citizens of Dublin in their religion, and they find it so strong and united that, if the matter be not conducted with great constancy and prudent discretion, it needs, must, and will procure great danger in this kingdom. Both in city and country, offices and duties of conformity in this point are so neglected, and the directions founded upon the laws of this realm so contemned and resisted, with an insolent and resolute obstinacy, that I fear it will prove a work of great difficulty to bring this ignorant, wilful, and, therefore, stubborn people to perform any duty either to God or to the King, unless their endeavours in this religious work may receive from England not only allowance, but also encouragement and direction. I write this to prepare your lordship's vigilant observation to meet with and prevent their further solicitation for toleration of their superstition."

Mason, in his *History of Saint Patrick's Cathedral*, gives the following account of Bishop Jones :—

He was the son of Sir Roger Jones, Knt., Alderman of London, of a family who had for a long time resided in Lancashire, in which county he was born. He received his education at Christchurch College, Cambridge, where he obtained the Degree of Master of Arts. When he had taken Orders he came into Ireland, and married Margaret, daughter of Adam Purdon,



Esq., of Lurgan-race, in the County of Louth, relict of John Douglass, Gent., and sister to the wife of Adam Loftus, Archbishop of Dublin, to which alliance he was probably indebted for this (the Deanery of St. Patrick's), and perhaps some subsequent promotions.

There was a singular congruity in the events which befel each of these persons : they were educated in the same university, married two sisters, both were Deans of St. Patrick's, Archbishops of Dublin, Chancellors and Lord Justices of Ireland, each of them left a more numerous progeny than any of their predecessors or successors in these dignities, and the elder branch of both families were ennobled in the persons of their immediate heirs. There is reason to believe, from the events recorded of them, that their private characters resembled each other in the same way.

Archbishop Jones presided over the See of Dublin until 1619, when he died, and was buried in St. Patrick's Cathedral, where his monument is still to be seen. A portrait of the Archbishop is preserved in the Museum at South Kensington.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE REIGN OF JAMES I.

BISHOP Jones's connection with the Diocese of Meath ended, as we have seen, with his translation to Dublin in 1605, that is to say, two years after the death of Queen Elizabeth. He was succeeded by Roger Dod, who had been Dean of Salop, and who survived his elevation to the episcopate by only three years. After him came George Montgomery, who sat from 1610 to 1620. In the year following, 1621, James Ussher, was appointed, and he continued to be Bishop of Meath until 1624, when he became Archbishop of Armagh. The episcopacy of these three prelates, therefore, fills up almost completely the time embraced by the reign of James I.

The first of the three, Roger Dod, had been Dean of Shrewsbury. His connection with the Diocese of Meath, however, was of such short duration that we have merely to record his death, which took place at Ardraccon on the 26th of July, 1608. He was buried in Ardraccon Church. Nearly three years elapsed before his successor was appointed.

Montgomery, the next in order, had been already raised to the episcopate, and held the Bishoprics of Derry, Raphoe, and Clogher. These were situated in parts of the country which seem to have been left derelict for a long time, and where there was a great need for the presence of a bishop who would devote his powers energetically to the advancement of the

Church. From the accounts that have come down to us it can scarcely be said that Bishop Montgomery rose to the occasion. Sir John Davies, who was at that time Attorney-General of Ireland, has left us an account of Clogher, and from it we learn that things had there come to a very low ebb. He says, "It appeared that the churches for the most part are utterly waste, that the King is patron of all, and that the incumbents are popish priests, instituted by bishops authorized from Rome, yet many of them, like other old priests of Queen Mary's time in England, ready to yield to conformity." Under circumstances such as these one would have expected that a new bishop would lose no time in making some effort towards the reformation of his diocese, but Montgomery was in no hurry to commence the work that had thus been placed in his hands. Two years after his appointment he was still in England, and his absence, Davies tells us, "hath been the chief cause that no course hath been hitherto taken to reduce this poor people to Christianity, and therefore, *majus peccatum habet.*" From such an account we would not be led to expect much from this prelate, when he became Bishop of Meath; nor can we estimate him the more highly when we learn that he retained, up to the time of his death, the Bishopric of Clogher, endeavouring to administer it and Meath together, and that along with these two Sees in Ireland he also held for some years the Deanery of Norwich.

Though thus falling far short of what would now be regarded as a standard of efficiency, Montgomery was highly thought of in his day. The King, writing to Sir Arthur Chichester in 1611, says of him, "It is well known that the Bishop of Clogher, elect of Meath, has rendered great service in the settlement of the

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Davies, *Letter to the Earl of Salisbury.*



churches of Ulster, and also lately of that of Norwich, of which he is dean." His Majesty goes on to express his high gratification at these services, and sends the bishop back to his charge in Ireland, where he is to be of the Council and directs that he shall enjoy the full revenues of Meath and Clogher. The King adds "The condition of the Diocese of Meath as regards true religion is very backward, chiefly from the want of a learned ministry, the means for maintaining them being deficient." His Majesty further directs that means be taken to compel the farmers of the impropriations to afford some competent means for the maintenance of a learned ministry, and that it be signified to them that if they refuse to comply, the King will be forced to look closely into the conditions of their leases, by which the churches are thus impoverished. About the same time the bishop himself wrote suggesting that portions of the old chantry lands might be allotted to those parishes where there were no glebes, and that "such glebes as have been lately taken away from incumbents, under cover of chantry, and concealed lands, (having been possessed as glebe lands by the incumbent for the space of 160 years or more), be restored again to the churches, whose incumbents cannot be maintained without them."

Although things were in such an unsatisfactory condition, the bishop still delayed in England, and only came to his new diocese in 1614. His passage across the Irish Sea was a terrible one, no less than six days having been taken in the transit, and the weather was so bad that "he was for his own safety obliged to kill all his horses, and lighten the bark, or else they had all been cast away." He was no sooner arrived than he found storms of another kind, and were it not for a timely warning, he would have found himself a

prisoner in the hands of Art Oge, one of the leaders of the rebels. In consequence of this an order was given that, on the occasion of any future war or rebellion, a ward should be placed in the bishop's house at Ardbracon, and under his command, "that henceforth he and his family may live in more safety and assurance."

It is quite evident that not much was expected in the way of efficiency from a bishop in those days, and that they did not always attain even to that low standard. One of our Meath clergy, Robert Draper, Rector of Trim, was then Bishop of Kilmore. According to Bishop Jones's Report he was resident in his parish, and if so, he must have been non-resident in his bishopric. He managed to alienate a "good parcel" of the income of the parish of Trim, bestowing it on his wife, who, after his death, became a Roman Catholic. In thus grasping at church property he followed an example which was shown by the highest dignitaries of the Church in that age. Bishops Brady and Jones had in the same way impoverished the Bishopric of Meath. The latter is bluntly called by Dean Swift, "that rascal Dean Jones," when he is referring to a similar transaction which took place when Jones was Dean of St. Patrick's. As to Draper's diocese of Kilmore, Sir John Davies tells us that the churches were "for the most part in ruins," and that the clergy were "poor, ragged, ignorant creatures." He says also of the bishop, that "his Lordship might have saved us this labour of enquiry touching matters ecclesiastical if he had been as careful to see the churches repaired and supplied with good incumbents as he is diligent in visiting his barbarous clergy, to make benefit out of their insufficiency, according to the proverb which is common in the mouth of one of

our great bishops here, that an Irish priest is better than a milch cow.”<sup>2</sup>

Bishop Draper appears to more advantage in the proposal which he made in 1584 for the establishment of a university at Trim. His letter on the subject is exceedingly interesting, not merely for the proposal which it contains, but for the description which he gives of the town of Trim at that time. It is as follows :

To the Right Honourable the Lord Burghley, Lord High Treasurer of England.

Most humbly beseecheth your honour Robert Draper, parson of Trim, in Ireland, that your lordship would vouchsafe to take view of the conveniences and commodities being in and about the said town of Trim for the foundation of an university, and that if your lordship shall like of them, it would please the same (both in consideration of the fitness of the place, and also in respect that your suppliant hath been long a suitor, to his great charge, though not for an university, yet for a grammar school to be erected in the said place) to grant your honour's letters to the Lord Deputy and Council of Ireland, that when that matter shall come in consultation there they will have (the rather at your honour's request) regard and respect to that poor town, being a place both of the fitness of it for that purpose, and for the extreme poverty that it is brought to, especially to be regarded and relieved.

First, it is situated in a most fresh and wholesome air, twenty miles from Dublin, and fifteen from Drogheda, an haven town.

The town itself is full of very fair castles and stone houses, builded after the English fashion, and divided into five fair streets, and hath in it the fairest and most stately castle that her Majesty hath in all Ireland, almost decayed.

It hath also one great and large abbey, nothing thereof defaced but the church, and therein great store of goodly rooms, in meetly good repair ; the house is put to no use, and will (I think) be easily bought of the owner, Edward Cusack, of Lesmollen. The said Edward hath also a friary in the said town, a very fit place for a college, which also may be easily be gotten of him.

<sup>2</sup> *Letter to the Earl of Salisbury.*



Further, your suppliant hath a friary, having staunch and good walls, for an hall, for four or five lodgings, a cellar, a kitchen, a place for lectures, with a pleasant backside, containing three acres at least; all which your said suppliant will freely give to the furtherance of this good work.

Through the midst of the town runneth the most pure and clear river of the Boyne. Up this river might all provision come from Drogheda to Trim by boat, if the statute to that purpose made in Sir Henry Sydney's time were executed.

Hard by the town is an excellent good quarry, if they should need any stone, limestone enough hard at the gate, slates within six miles, and timber enough within three miles.

The country round about very fruitful of corn and cattle, yielding besides plentiful store of firewood and turf, a very good and sweet fuel, and if the statute aforesaid for the setting open of weirs and fishing places in the Boyne were executed, the fuel in great quantity for small price, might be brought down by boat.

Lastly, (which is a matter of great importance), the town is in the midst of the English Pale, and is well and strongly walled about, a thing that will be a mean to draw learned men thither, and be great safety to the whole company of students there; for your honour knoweth that wheresoever the university be founded, the town must of necessity have a good wall, else will no learned men go from hence or any other place thither, neither they of the country send their sons to any place that is not defensible and safe from the invasion of the Irish. The building of a wall will cost as much as the colleges, which charge (if your honour, and they by your procurement, shall like of this place) will be saved.<sup>3</sup>

All this pleading, alas, was wasted, for not long afterwards it was decided that the University should be founded in Dublin, on the site of the old Monastery of All Hallows.

We need not suppose that things in Meath were quite as bad as the descriptions given above of Clogher and Kilmore. Its position as one of the counties of the Pale, and within easy reach of the metropolis would ensure that the bishop could not utterly neglect his

<sup>3</sup> Butler's *Trim*.

duty ; but the fact that such a condition was tolerated in any part of the country shows how ill managed was the state ecclesiastical, and it enables to understand that the time was one in which the diocese, so far from making progress, was becoming every year more disordered.

We have comparatively little record of the acts of Bishop Montgomery, but we have the means of testing how the Diocese of Meath fared under his jurisdiction, for in the year 1615—that is, about four years after his appointment—there was a visitation made of the diocese, the record of which remains, and another similar visitation was made in 1622, just after the appointment of Bishop Ussher. As the latter is the more complete, a full account of it will be given in the next chapter, as a picture of the state of the church in that age. Here it may suffice to point out that the differences between these two accounts furnish us with valuable evidence of the changes that were then taking place. The one account must have been compiled almost immediately after Bishop Montgomery's appointment, and the other immediately after his death. In comparing the two accounts we have, therefore, what is practically the record of his episcopate.

The first thing that strikes us, in comparing the two accounts, is the manifest neglect of the church fabrics which must have characterized the period that separates the one from the other. There are no less than sixty-eight churches which in 1615 are returned as "repaired," and in 1622 are said to be "ruined." It is hard to understand how so many could have gone to ruin in so short a time. Possibly they were already falling into decay, and as many of them had only thatched roofs, a short time sufficed to bring them

into a ruinous condition. However, that may be, we can scarcely avoid the conclusion that there was conspicuous neglect somewhere, when seven years could make such a difference between the two reports. Bishop Montgomery notes several cases in which he had admonished the impropiator or the incumbent to undertake the repair of the church without delay, and in a few instances, he says that, he had sequestered the income, or threatened to do so, unless the church were put into decent order. But threats such as these are utterly futile unless it is clearly understood that they will be followed by resolute action, and that is exactly what was wanting in this case. There seem to have been only two instances—Balsoon and Castlecor—in which the bishop's admonitions had any effect. In every other case, the churches reported by Montgomery as ruinous, and ordered by him to be repaired, are still said to be ruinous in the report of 1622.

The non-residence of many of the clergy was a crying evil, not only in that age, but in all the time that elapsed from the first coming of the English down to a comparatively recent period. Under an energetic bishop the scandal would be to some extent diminished, but as soon as vigilance was relaxed it assumed again alarming proportions. In this respect, too, the deterioration in the seven years that elapsed between the two reports is very marked. Things were bad enough in 1615, but there was, at all events, an attempt to administer strictly the discipline of the diocese in this respect, and in most cases those who were non-resident were deprived. Thus, Thomas Keating was rector of Killare (now in the Union of Drumconrath). He was non-resident and beneficed elsewhere. He was accordingly deprived, and the fruits of the



benefice sequestrated. At Strokestown, in the same neighbourhood, the rector, Robert Burton, is reported as "*homo otiosus et indignus*" as well as non-resident. He, too, was deprived, and a curate was appointed to perform the duties of the parish. In several other cases it is the same. But action such as this was of no avail if the successors of these deprived clergy were not bound to a stricter performance of their duty. That it was possible so to bind them was practically demonstrated shortly afterwards by Bishop Bedell in the neighbouring diocese of Kilmore. But Bishop Montgomery proved himself very lax in this respect, and so we find that in 1662 there were many of the Meath clergy who lived in England, or in distant parts of the country, and who sometimes made most inadequate provision for the performance of their duty. Comparing the two lists we find only one name returned in both as non-resident, Gilbert Purdam, Rector of Paynestown and Multifarnham, two parishes almost as far asunder as they could be in the diocese, who had the King's licence to remain in England for the sake of his health. All the cases of non-residence, therefore, which are noted in the Report of 1622, except this one, are due to the permission or connivance of Bishop Montgomery.

At the conclusion of Bishop Montgomery's Report we are told that "the number of preachers in this diocese is 35, resident 3. The number of reading ministers is 40." This proportion of preachers to readers is about the same as in 1622. The preaching ministers were more efficient, and better educated than the readers, and it is worthy of notice that it is amongst these that we have the greater number of non-residents. Three residents out of thirty-five was certainly an appalling state of things. In this respect

we note considerable improvement in 1622. Montgomery also tells us, "There is a Publique Schoole kept in this Diocesse att Tryme by Thomas Whitely, Minister and Preacher att Trym, and appointed by the Bishop of Meath to teach the Publicke Schoole there." The Rector of Trim at this time was Thomas Jones, Archbishop of Dublin, and formerly Bishop of Meath, and Whitely was his curate, as well as master of the diocesan school. Shortly after this time the Rectory of Trim was united to the See of Meath, a vicar being appointed and endowed, on condition that the bishop shall not demise the mansion house, or any of the profits of the parsonage for any longer term than during his own incumbency of the bishopric." This arrangement continued down to the time of Dis-establishment.

When Montgomery died, in 1621, the most eminent man in the Irish Church was undoubtedly Doctor James Ussher, at that time Professor of Divinity in the University of Dublin. No one, therefore, was surprised to find that he was nominated by the King to the vacant bishopric. In a letter of congratulation, the Lord Deputy of Ireland says, "I thank God for your preferment to the Bishopric of Meath, his Majesty therein hath done a gracious favour to his poor church here, for the papists themselves have largely testified their gladness of it." Great things might have been expected from such an appointment. Ussher, however, only held the See for a short time, being promoted to Armagh in 1624, nor does he seem to have devoted much even of that short time to the work of his diocese, for during these three years he lived mostly in Dublin or in London, and was seldom to be found amongst his own people. Primate Hampton administered a mild rebuke to him on one occasion, when a sermon

preached by Ussher in Dublin, which will be noticed presently, had given great offence to some of the people. "Withal," he says, "it will not be amiss in my opinion for your lordship to withdraw yourself from those parts, and to spend more time in your own diocese, that such as will not hear your doctrine may be drawn to love and reverence your lordship for your hospitality and conversation. Bear with the plains of an old man's pen, and leave nothing undone to recover the intercourse of amity between you and the people of your charge." It does not appear that Ussher took the hint thus kindly given, for he shortly afterwards applied for, and obtained leave, to go to England for the purposes of study. We cannot, therefore, suppose that he influenced to any great extent the history of the Diocese of Meath.

The period that we are now considering marks the rise of a much more militant type of Romanism than that of the reign of Elizabeth, and at the same time an attempt on the part of the English government to enforce uniformity in matters of religion with a higher hand than formerly. So, on the one hand, we have laws enacted and re-enacted, banishing all Romish priests from the land, and on the other hand, we have the number of these priests steadily increasing, and the religious orders endeavouring to re-establish themselves. Bishop Mant tells us that up to the year 1684, "the Papists generally attended divine service in the churches, and were known by the name of Church-Papists." Judging by the description of the clergy given by Bishops Brady and Jones, we are not surprised that this should have been the case, for many of them were conformists only in name; the Church of Rome, too, had not then given up all hope that the work of the Reformation might yet be undone,



and the *status ante quo* restored. But when the character of the clergy was gradually altered, and these hopes were shown to be futile, strong efforts were made to dissuade the people from attending service in the parish churches. Boycotting was then, as now, a formidable weapon, and was freely employed against those who were disposed to obey the Act of Uniformity. At the same time the Government was not courageous enough either to enforce or to repeal the Act, and the result was that fines under this penal law were inflicted often enough to be a source of irritation, but not often enough to make the Act effective. The Roman mission priests, on their side, were not content with endeavouring to safeguard the faith of their own people. Many of them were eager and keen controversialists, and strove continually to make converts from the ranks of the Protestants.

Ussher himself was challenged, while still a professor in Trinity College, by William Malone, a learned Jesuit, to defend the tenets of Protestantism. His interrogator, assuming that it was admitted on all hands that the Church of Rome for four or five hundred years after Christ did hold the true religion, asks "What Bishop of Rome did first alter that religion which you commend in them for the first four hundred years? In what Pope, his days, was the true religion overthrown in Rome?" He goes on further to demand testimony from the primitive church, and from Scripture which condemns the doctrines which had been rejected by the reformed church. Ussher had answered him immediately in a short treatise, which he afterwards, while Bishop of Meath, expanded into a voluminous work. He treats at great length of Traditions, the Real Presence, Confession, the Priest's power to forgive sins, Purgatory, Prayer for the Dead,

the Limbus Patrum and Christ's Descent into Hell, Prayer to Saints, Images, Free Will, and Merits. He concludes by saying, " Thus have I gone over all the particular articles propounded by our challenger, and performed therein more a great deal than he required at my hands. That which he desired in the name of his fellows was, that we would allege 'but any one text of Scripture which condemneth any of the above written points.' He hath now presented to him, not texts of Scripture only, but testimonies of the fathers also, justifying our dissent from them, not in one, but in all those points, wherein he was so confident that 'they of our side who had read the fathers could well testify' that all antiquity did in judgment concur with the now Church of Rome. And if he look into every one of them more nearly, he may perhaps find that we are not such strangers to the original and first breeding of these Romish errors as he did imagine. It now remaineth that he make good what he hath undertaken, namely, that for the confirmation of all the above mentioned points of his religion, he produce both good and certain grounds out of the sacred Scriptures, and the general consent likewise of the saints and fathers of the primitive church. Wherein, as I advise him to spare his pains in labouring to prove those things which he seeth me beforehand readily to have yielded unto, so I wish him also not to forget his own motion, made in the perclose of his challenge, that all may be done with Christian charity and sincerity, to the glory of God, and instruction of them that are astray."<sup>4</sup>

The following letter, addressed to Bishop Ussher, from Mr. John Carter, Rector of Killucan, shows how, even in country places, the controversy was being

<sup>4</sup> Ussher, *Answer to a Challenge made by a Jesuit in Ireland*.

carried on, and how strenuous were the efforts made to make converts to Romanism.

My very good lord,

About eight or nine months now past, I received an answer made by a Romish priest unto certain demands of a Protestant gentleman; and being requested to make a reply unto the same by some of my good friends and neighbours, I condescended to use my best endeavour herein, being moved thereunto, both in respect of my oath formerly taken to resist, oppose, and refute the adversary to the utmost of my power, and also considering that Popish priests and Jesuits were never more busy than at this day, seeking by all means to seduce and pervert unstable souls, and such as are not firmly grounded in the knowledge of true religion, in respect whereof I may say with Bishop Jewell, that seeing they set out their flags of defiance, and already boast of victory, *nos non convenit esse mutos*; the which hath made me, though the weakest of a thousand, to enter the lists and to stand in the breach, with a full resolution, by God's assistance, never to start back from the defence of God's truth. And now, having finished the task laid upon me, I have thought good, according to my bounden duty, to send by bearer this my reply unto your lordship, humbly entreating that you will be pleased to read it over; and if you shall find any great oversight in the same, I desire your lordship to give me notice thereof, to the end I may amend it in my next copy. As for small slips or defects, I hope I shall perceive them myself. And indeed I would not have committed this treatise unto your lordship's view, so imperfect as it is (this being but the first copy thereof, lately drawn out of a rude and vast heap of disordered collections) but that my adversary the answerer is so importunate for a reply, boasting that he hath done such a work as no Protestant will be ever able to answer, and therefore I am very desirous that your lordship will vouchsafe to read it over, and to give me your advice concerning the same, before such time as I write it over again in such sort as I mean to deliver it unto him; and if I shall receive any encouragement by your approbation of what I have done, I shall be willing at any time, as occasion shall be offered, to use my best endeavours in this kind, otherwise my purpose is to bend my studies another way, desiring to know nothing but Jesus Christ and



Him crucified. I purpose to send this bearer again for this treatise within this six or seven days, by which time I hope your lordship will have read it over.

And so, with remembrance of my humble duty, I commend your lordship to the tuition of the Almighty.

Your lordship's in all duty

To be commanded,

JOHN CARTER.

Killucken, Septemb. 14, 1623.<sup>5</sup>

A letter like this shows that there were some amongst the clergy who were ready to meet argument with argument, and to oppose the zeal of the Romish controversialists with corresponding zeal. Other clergymen, no doubt, like Carter, did good work in earnestly contending for the faith, but their efforts were not commemorated in the records of the time, and if it were not for the chance survival of a letter such as the above, we might have concluded that Romanism was only opposed by proclamations, which threatened very terrible things, but which were seldom followed up by action.

In 1605 an Order was issued commanding the Popish clergy to depart from the kingdom before the sixteenth of the following December, unless they would conform to the laws of the land. This proclamation was renewed in 1610, but in both cases it seems to have been little more than a dead letter. In Meath, where several families of the leading gentry were Romanists, the priests always found good protectors, and lived for the most part unmolested. The following document was drawn up by Bishop Montgomery in 1615, and shows how (notwithstanding the laws to the contrary) the position of Roman priests was fully

<sup>5</sup> Elrington's *Ussher*, Vol. XVI., p. 407

recognized at the time. The list, it will be noted, only professes to give the names of "eminent priests," and is not to be taken as in any way indicating the number of Romish ecclesiastics who were then at work in the diocese.

THE NAMES of such Jesuits and other eminent priests as are appointed by the Pope, and doe exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Diocess of Meath.

Robert ffitz Oliver Nugent, Jesuite, cousin german once removed to the Lo. of Delvin, with whom and the Countesse Dowagr. of Kildare he ordinarily remaineth.

James Plunkett, Priest, Vicar-Generall of Westmeath, liveth att Killalon the Lord of Killeene his house, and remaineth ordinarily with the noble man; reputed parson of Trime.

Byram O'Mulledy, Priest, exerciseing ecclesiasticall jurisdiction and remaineth for the most parte with Sr. Christopher Nugent.

Maurice Ultagh, a traytor, generall of the ffranciscans, who with some other ffryars live in the abbey of Multifernam, Leased by the King to Richard Cusack, of Lismallin, Esqr.

Walter ffitz James Dalton, Priest, of 80 years old.

fferall MaKogan, Priest; Richard Browne, Priest; James Plunkett, Priest; Walter ffitz James, Priest. These four doe exercise ecclesiasticall jurisdiction throughout the whole Diocess of Meath and begg maintenance for students in Paris & other places beyond the seas.

Donough O'Mooney, Jesuite, serveth, keepeth for the most part with Sr. John Magaghlin, knt.

Roorey O'Mullen, Priest, exerciseth jurisdiction in Clone-macknosh.

ffather Nast & Coppinger, Jesuite, who keepeth for the most parte with Sr. Edward ffitz Gerald, kmt., and hath a brother lately come from Rome.

Henry Plunkett, Priest; Nicholas Garrett, Priest. These 2 were banished by my Lord Deputy, & returned againe from beyond seas.

William Verdon, Priest, keepeth with the Visct. Gormonston, whose sister is a professed nun, and they two keep house together.

ffather Dease, a Jesuite, in Westmeath, depending upon the Baron of Delvin. He is supposed to be author of the

Letters printed from Paris to the persecuted Catholiques (as he termeth them in Ireland) concerning presenting of Recusants and other points.

This last mentioned Father Dease was shortly afterwards consecrated Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath, being the first appointed by the Pope since the time of the Reformation, and under his auspices the abbey of Multifarnham was rebuilt, and once more occupied ; a Capuchin abbey was founded at Slane, and another in the parish of Saint Mary's, Drogheda. He also introduced a community of Jesuits, and encouraged many of the religious orders to work in his diocese. Although he thus showed himself zealous in promoting the interests of his Church, he disassociated himself from political movements as far as possible, and in later years he incurred no little odium from his own co-religionists, because he discountenanced the insurrection which was soon to lead to so much civil war and bloodshed.

As might have been expected, there were many who blamed the authorities for their lax administration of the law. Prominent among these was Bishop Ussher, whose zeal caused at times considerable ill-will against him. In a letter written to him by Sir Henry Bourghier in 1622, that gentleman states, "I hear much murmurings among the papists here, especially those of our county, against some new persecutions (you know the phrase) lately raised in Ireland, and particularly against some courses of your lordship's in the Diocese of Meath, as namely in the case of Clandestine christenings, &c., beyond all others of your rank." From this we would conclude that the bishop was endeavouring to enforce a stricter administration of the law in his diocese, and in this respect to be following a policy different from that of his pre-



decessors, and of the other bishops, so that the Romanists spoke of it as a new persecution.

Two occurrences which happened in the diocese of Meath at this time no doubt helped to whet the bishop's zeal. One was the case of Mr. John Ankers, who had spiritual oversight of a large tract of country in Westmeath, being incumbent of the parishes of Drumraney, Ballyloughloe, Kilcleagh, Athlone, and Clonmacnoise. This clergyman wrote to the bishop, "That going to read prayers at Kilkenny in Westmeath, he found an old priest, and about forty with him in the church, who was so bold as to require him (the said Ankers) to depart, until he had done his business." The other was the case of the monks of Multifarnham, who had been dispossessed by the Lord Deputy, but who, not content with returning contrary to his orders, were actually making collections "for the re-edifying of another abbey near Mullingar, for the entertaining of another swarm of locusts."<sup>6</sup>

Shortly after this, Lord Falkland came over as Lord Deputy, and on the day that he received the sword there was service in Christ Church Cathedral, at which Bishop Ussher preached. He took for his text the words in the thirteenth chapter of Romans. "He beareth not the sword in vain," and took the opportunity of speaking out his mind on the subject of the administration of the law. In a letter to Lord Grandison, Ussher gives a resume of the sermon, and says that in the latter part, "falling upon the duty of the magistrates in seeing those laws executed that were made for the furtherance of God's service, I first declared that no more was to be expected herein from the subordinate magistrate than he had received in commission from the supreme, in whose power it

<sup>6</sup> Mant.

lay to limit the other at his pleasure. Secondly, I wished that if his Majesty (who is under God our supreme governor) were pleased to extend the clemency toward his subjects that were recusants, some order, notwithstanding, might be taken with them, that they should not give us public affronts, and take possession of our churches before our faces. Thirdly, I did entreat that whatsoever connivance were used unto others, the laws might be strictly executed against such as revolted from us, that we might at leastwise keep our own, and not suffer them, without all fear, to fall away from us. Lastly, I made a public protestation, that it was far from my mind to excite the magistrate unto any violent courses against them, as one that naturally did abhor all cruel dealings, and wished that effusion of blood might be held rather the badge of the whore of Babylon than of the Church of God."

This sermon caused a great sensation, and the words of the preacher, grossly exaggerated, were repeated for the purpose of inflaming the minds of the people. Ussher complains that "the popish priests persuade their followers that I said, the sword had rusted too long in the sheath, whereas in my whole sermon I never made mention either of rust or sheath." It was not, however, only the Romanists who thought that he had gone too far. The Archbishop of Armagh wrote to him at once, and counselled "a voluntary retraction and milder interpretation of the points offensive, and especially of drawing the sword, of which spirit we are not nor ought to be, for our weapons are not carnal, but spiritual." In the same letter he counselled Ussher, as we have already seen, to spend more time in his diocese. As a result, it is probable that Ussher preached another sermon, in which he explained his views more fully, and toned down to

some extent the expressions which had given so much offence.

Whatever offence this sermon of Ussher's may have given in certain quarters, it did not cause him to forfeit the favour of the King, for when the Archbishopric of Armagh became vacant shortly afterwards, the Bishop of Meath was advanced to the Metropolitan See. This was one of the last acts of James I., who died soon after. Anthony Martin, Dean of Waterford, succeeded as Bishop of Meath. His episcopate witnessed great calamities, and threatened destruction of the Church of Ireland. Before entering on the story of that time, however, we may pause to consider an account of the Diocese of Meath in the last days of King James's reign, which is furnished to us in the *Visitation Return* compiled by Bishop Ussher in the year 1622.



## CHAPTER XVII.

### VISITATION OF MEATH, 1622.

IN 1622, that is two years after the appointment of Bishop Ussher to the See of Meath, a Royal Commission was issued for the Visitation of the Province of Armagh. The Report furnished on that occasion by the new bishop is preserved in the Library of Trinity College, and is printed in Elrington's edition of Ussher's works. It is full of information, and enables us to form a fairly accurate picture of the state of the diocese in that year.

He begins by giving an account of the "Revennewes of the Bishoppricke," from which it appears that the gross income of the bishop amounted to £632 6s. 6d. a year. The endowments should have yielded a much greater sum than this, but successive bishops—notably Brady and Jones—had alienated a great part of them. This was done by giving long leases at a very low rent. In such a case the bishop received a fine from the lessee, which he appropriated to himself, leaving his successors in the See with a correspondently reduced income. As an example, we may take the episcopal property in the Parish of Moydrum, which consisted of about one hundred and fifty acres. This was leased by Bishop Brady for sixty-one years, at a rent of forty-five shillings per annum; Bishop Jones did not wait for the tenure to expire, but granted a renewal of one hundred and one years, to commence at the end of the former lease, at a rent of three pounds

a year. We are not told what sums were paid for such liberal concessions, but they must have been something considerable, and the inequitable nature of the transactions was so apparent, that it is hard to understand how such things were permitted even in an age when abuses of all kinds were rampant. When the bishops behaved in this way, it is not to be wondered at that laymen were ready to follow their example, and so we have several cases in which they managed to evade the payments of the reserved rents. Ussher tells, for example, of large possessions in the King's County which had been leased by Bishop Brady to the Earl of Kildare, at a rent of three pounds a year, and tells us that this rent was never paid. "This was done," he says, "under colour of exchange of these lands for Bishoppescorte, which the Earl challengeth as his own, whereas it is well known to have been the ancient demesnes of the bishopric, and the only house where he made his residence in Westmeath." This is, as far as I know, the only intimation we have that the bishop had any other residence besides the palace at Ardbraccan. It is interesting, too, to note that it bore the same name as has been appropriated to the present residence of the Bishop of Meath. It was probably the place which is now known as Bishops-town Castle, in the Parish of Ballymore, not far from the church which for a time served as Cathedral for the Diocese of Meath.

Ussher goes on to give an account of the diocese, parish by parish, and the first thing that strikes us in it is the large number of churches which had been allowed to go to ruin. Only forty-nine are reported as having both chancel and church in good repair. Besides these, there were thirty-one churches partially in ruin, but still capable of being used, making a total

of eighty in all. Some parts of the diocese were in much better condition in this respect than others. In the Rural Deanery of Duleek, for example, there were sixteen churches more or less in repair, which were available for divine service, and one, the church of Ardmulchan, was in process of rebuilding. In Ratoath Deanery there were six churches, in Skryne fourteen. in Trim eleven, in Slane ten, and in Fore ten. In the Deanery of Kells, however, there was only one church, that of Kells itself, and of it the Report states that "the body is altogether unrepared; the chauncell is in good repair." The churches of Moynalty, Kilskyre, Girley, Donaghpatrick, as well as all the lesser churches in that district, were in complete ruin. In the Deanery of Clonmacnoise, the only churches were two, standing side by side at the "Seven Churches," but a new church was in course of erection at Athlone. The churches of Ballyloughloe, Moate, and Banagher were in ruins, and in the last parish there was no clergyman nor means to support one. The Deanery of Ardnurcher had only one church, with another in course of erection. This deanery included the great parish of Fercall, which embraces a considerable part of the King's County, and extends almost from Tullamore to Birr. There was no church in the whole district. In Clonard Deanery, there were churches at Clonard and Killucan, but all the rest were ruinous. Mullingar and Loughsuedy were somewhat better. The former had eight churches, and the latter seven. It would thus appear that there were some parts of the diocese which were fairly well supplied, whereas in others there was no adequate provision for the celebration of divine service.

We are surprised to find that the church of Nobber, of which the bishop was himself rector, is amongst



those which are in ruin. The Archbishop of Armagh was Rector of Athboy, but he, too, seems to have been careless about the fabric of his church, for it is reported that "the church is ruynous ; the chauncell reasonable well repayred." Navan was then, as now, an important place, but its ecclesiastical buildings left much to be desired, for though the church was in good repair, the chancel was reported to be ruinous. The perpetual curate lived at Ardmulchan, which parish he held with Navan, and he served besides the parishes of Dunsany and Kilberry, so that he had four parishes in all, in the same neighbourhood, but no two of them adjoining one another. Of Saint Mary's, Drogheda, we are told that "this is a great church, and both church and chauncell are indifferently repaired." Of Dunboyne too we read, "this is a great parish, and the church and chauncell are both ruyned." Other examples might be multiplied, showing how inadequate was the provision made in some of the most important places.

In the matter of glebe houses, the report is somewhat more satisfactory. At least seventy-three parishes had houses, large or small, fit for residence. In this respect the diocese was much better off than it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century. These residences are differently described. Ordinarily the expression used is "a manse house," but in some cases the residence is described as a "castle." In Trim, for example, there is, we are told, "a fayre castle and an hall with lyme and stone, many houses of office which are now decayed, a garden and a back-side, and a close contayning two acres of pasture." Under the heading of Slane, we read that there was "a faire stone house or castle and some howses of offices reasonable repayred, a haggard and back-

sides. Of ancient tyme there belonged to this rectory a colledge and Cd (? 400) or thereabouts acres of land, and some twenty howses for maynteynaunce of foure priestes, foure clarkes, and foure quiresters. The walles of the college are yet standing, and adjoining to the parsonage house, all wch have of long tyme beene in the possession of the lo. of Slane, but by what right it is not knowne." At Drumconrath there was not only "a faire castle and manse house," but also "a streat of messuages or tenant houses in ye towne of Drumconragh, called the parsons streate."

Fifteen of the houses are dignified with the name of castles. The bishop's own residence is modestly described as "a faire house with convenient buildings and houses of office." All the glebe houses, of course, were not equally good, and nine of them are specially mentioned as "small." In a few cases the clergyman's house stood in the churchyard, near or attached to the church. Thus, at Mayne, there was "a small castle at the west end of the church," at Rathconnell, "a small castle at the east end of the chauncell," at Moylough (near Loughcrew) "a little castle at the west end of the church" at Drumrany "a small stone house at the end of the church," at Carrick, "a small house in the church yard."

The bishop notes several instances in which houses and lands belonging to the church had been seized by laymen, and seemingly there was no redress to be had. In Rathfeigh (between Ratoath and Kentstown) there were fifteen acres of glebe "now detained by the parochians." In Ardracran, under the very eyes of the bishop, there was no glebe house, for although there was "a manse house commonly called the vicarage house," it had been taken from the parson, and "now his majesty's farmor of the impropriacion

converteth it to his owne use." The impropiator in this case was Sir Roger Jones, a relative of the former bishop, and he not only seized the glebe house but also kept back the great tithes of Deramstown, and the small tithes of the whole parish, which used formerly to have been paid to the vicar, leaving the whole income of the parish at the miserable rate of seven pounds a year. One clergyman, the Rector of Dysart (now in the Union of Leney) was left without a house because "his houses uppon his rectory were burned over his head by some malicious persons." On the whole, however, the state of the parsons' residences is better than we would have expected from the condition of the diocese in other respects.

Several of the clergy were non-resident, and left their duty to be performed by curates, or as happened in some cases, made no provision whatever. The Parishes of Paynestown and Multifarnham were both held by the one rector, who lived in England, by licence from his Majesty. He made, however, adequate provision for both parishes. The Rector of Donaghpatrick also lived in England, leaving a curate to do the duty. The Rector of Loughbraccan (now in the Union of Drumconrath) was less conscientious. He lived in England, but seems to have appointed no one to do the duty for which he received the income. Two clergymen of Armagh, Luke Ussher, a distant cousin of the bishop's, and George Sing, held parishes in the Diocese of Meath. The former was Rector of Kentstown, and the latter of Killary (now in the Union of Drumconrath). Although the parishes were very far apart, they employed the one curate for both, "a very old and sickly man," quite unable to perform any duty. The Rectors of Kilbrew and Newtown Fertullagh both lived in Dublin, and employed



no curates. The Rector of Rathmore (near Athboy) also lived in Dublin, and left the duty to be performed by Mr. Robert Shepley, who also undertook the cure of souls in Taughmon and Durrow, thus charging himself with three cures almost as far from one another as it would be possible to place three parishes in the diocese. The Rector of Clonarney (now in the Union of Drumcree) had a parish also in the Diocese of Clogher, and contrived to do the duty by residing sometimes in the one diocese, and sometimes in the other. He, however, kept his nephew as curate to do the duty in his absence. The Rector of Kells and Archdeacon of Meath was also Dean of Christ Church, and lived in Dublin. He left as curate Mr. William Smyth, who not only undertook to serve the large Parish of Kells, but also acted as Curate of Moynalty, where the rector was again non-resident, and was besides Rector of the parishes of Newtown (near Moynalty) and Knock (now in the Union of Drakes-town), and Vicar of Kilpatrick (same union). In most of the cases which are here detailed it was quite impossible that the duty could be adequately performed.

It was inevitable, and rather for the advantage of the diocese than otherwise, that several parishes should be united under one incumbent. There was great difficulty, however, in making suitable unions. Ussher remarks on this subject, " If the smallnes of the meanes which cometh to the incumbentes be regarded, then many of the liveings in this dioces are fitt to be united to make upp a competent meanes for the minister. But if the spaciousness of the parishes (which are large, and consist of so many inhabitantes as if they should be reformed and brought to the church would be more in each parish than the church would hould), and the difference of the patrons, the patronages being in

severall mens hands, I thinke none of them fitt to be united, but that there were power and authoritie given to the bishopp for the bettering of the means of well deserving ministers, to unite such and so many liveings of the value of twenty poundes ster. per annum and under, as he shall thinke fitting dureing the incumbency of such well deserving minsters." One would imagine from this that pluralities were almost unknown in the diocese at the time, whereas there were very few ministers, well deserving or otherwise, who had not under his care more than one parish ; so that the power and authority which the bishop desires had actually been exercised to a very large extent. But what the bishop means is evidently that when a clergyman is appointed to more than one parish, there should be some direction and control in arranging that the parishes should be contiguous. As it was, there was no method, and the result was sometimes extraordinary. Sometimes the parishes served by the one incumbent were widely separated from one another, as Ballygarth (near Julianstown) and Kilskyre, Mullingar and Mayne, Rathconrath and Diamor (near Loughcrew), and several others. Sometimes, too, when parishes did adjoin, the extent was quite beyond the possibility of efficient working. A notable example is Athlone. The one incumbent served Athlone, Kilcleagh (Moate), Clonmacnoise, and Ballyloughloe. With judicious unions, the diocese might have been fairly well served by the body of clergy which was then employed, but as matters were arranged, it would be scarcely possible to imagine a more defective system.

Another result of the difficulty of making suitable unions was that some parts of the diocese were left without any ministration whatever. In the following nineteen parishes there was neither church nor clergy-

man :—Moymett, Ratane, Churchtown, Clonmacduff, Tulloghenoge, Bective, Emlagh, Kilshine, Disertaley, Leney, Stafernan, Leodgarvick, Impar, Villapagan, Vastina, Saint Thomas Loughsuedy, Gallen, Wherry, and Rynagh. Most of these were small parishes, and probably contained few people, but some of them were important, and it reveals a state of great weakness when so many of them were left without any provision for supplying the means of grace.

The clergy are spoken of, some as “reading” and some as “preaching” ministers. This was a distinction constantly observed at the time, and explains itself. The “readers” were not allowed to preach, but made use of the Homilies for the instruction of the people. Ussher singles out some of his clergy for special commendation as expositors, and speaks of them as good preachers. Among the rest, it is interesting to notice the name of the Curate of Trim, Mr. John Gregge, “a Master of Artes, a good preacher, of good life and honest conversacion, and very paynfull in his ministry.” Painful, it is needless to remark, means simply “painstaking.” It will be remembered with what humour Archbishop Trench remarks: “Nor can I doubt if we had more painful preachers in the old sense of the word, that is who took pains themselves, we should have fewer painful ones in the modern sense, who cause pain to their hearers.”

There is rather a surprising thing in connection with Bishop Ussher’s list, to which he does not allude, namely, that several of his incumbents did not take Holy Orders until long after the date of their appointments. We learn this from the report of a Royal Visitation, which was held in Trim, on January the 8th, 1633. In that Report, we have the date of the clergyman’s ordination as well as his induction, and we find



that in many cases he was admitted to the cure of souls before he had taken either Deacon's or Priest's Orders. Here are some examples :—Alexander Sharpe was ordained Deacon and Priest by the Bishop of Down and Connor on the 26th of April, 1621. He had already been admitted to the cure of souls in the Parish of Killochonnigan on the 27th of March, 1619, and to the Vicarage of Clonard on the 20th of the following May. Richard Purdon was ordained priest and deacon in 1591; he had been already for ten years Rector of Kilskyre, and seems to have taken Orders with a view of succeeding to the parish of Killalon, which he obtained in 1592. William Fitzsymonds was made Vicar of Moyglare in 1611; he only took Deacon's Orders in 1615, and was not priested until 1623. Alexander Plunkett was made Deacon and Priest in 1615; he had been Vicar of Loughcrew since 1603. Richard Price was Vicar of Ardnurcher in 1624; he only obtained Deacon's Orders on the 26th of May, 1626, and Priest's Orders on the 22nd of September in the same year. Oliver Plunkett was appointed to Clonabraney in 1603; he only took Priest's Orders twenty years later. Whatever explanation may be given of these facts, they certainly point to great laxity on the part of our church rulers.

As to the incomes of the clergy, in most cases they were very moderate indeed, and we can only wonder how, even in that age, it was possible for them to subsist on such a miserable pittance. Money was more valuable then than it is now, but all the same, it cannot be denied that the condition of an Irish clergyman in the reign of James I. was anything but enviable from a worldly point of view. In computing the incomes it is of course necessary to take not the income of each parish separately, but the

income of each clergyman, derived in most cases from several parishes. In order to arrive at this, I have compiled a "Clergy List" from the materials furnished by Bishop Ussher, and as this embodies much quaint and interesting information of all kinds, I propose to give it to the reader in full. The amount stated in each case is the income from all sources, except assistant curacies.

## CLERGY LIST OF THE DIOCESE OF MEATH, 1622.

(Abbreviations—R., Rector. V., Vicar. P.C., Perpetual Curate. C., Curate-Assistant).

Ardmagh, Xpofer of Gods Providence Lo : Archbp., Prymate and Metropolitan of all Ireland, R. Athboy (income not given).

Agone, John, a native in Deacon Orders, C. Castlecarr, Mayne and Lickbla.

Agone, Patrick, a native and a reading minister, P.C. St. Mary and St. Fechin Fore, £3.

Anderson, Adam, a Mr. of Artes, a preacher of good life and conversacion, R. Dysart, Resideth at Kilbeggan for that his houses uppon his rectory were burned over his head by some malicious persons. £20.

Areskyn, James, a Mr. of Artes, a preacher of good life and conversacion, R. Rathconrath and Pierstown ; V. Diamor. £68.

Ankers, John, Batchler of Artes, a preacher of good life and conversacion, R. Drumraney ; V. Ballyloughloe, Killeagh, Athlone, and Clonmacnoise. £79.

Barlow, Randoll, Batchelor of Divinitie, Archdeacon of Meath ; he is Dean of Christ Church in Dublin and for the most part resideth there, R. Kells. £140.

Bathe, John, one of the country birth, lately reclaimed from Popery, R. Rathfeigh. £30.

Beckwith, Leonard, a reading minister, he resideth in the dioces of Dublin, R. Kilbrew. £30.

Bocham, Nicholas, a native, a reading minister, V. Danestown ; P.C. Macetown. £7.

- Booning, Robert, a Mr. of Artes, a preacher of good life and conversacion, R. Agher ; V. Kilmore and Laracor ; P.C. Aratstown, Newtown by Trim, Kilcooly, and Kildalkey. £50.
- Burton, Robert, a reading minister, V. St. Mary's Drogheda ; P.C. Dunmore, Colpe, and Mornanstown. £12/3/4.
- Byram, James, a preaching minister, V. Rathconnell and Port-nashangan. £18.
- Carter, John, Mr. of Artes, a preacher of good life and honest conversacion, R. & V. Killucan, where he resideth and serveth the cure diligently. £170.
- Chapman, Nathaniell, a Mr. of Artes and a preacher, R. Lough-braccan. He is in England. £6/13/4.
- Coffy, Richard, a native, V. Tymoole. £7/10/-.
- Cooke, Robert, born in this country of English parents, a reading minister of honest life and conversacion. V. Culmullen ; P.C. Ballymaglasson, Gallow, Ballfeighan, and Drumlargan. £17/10/-.
- Culme, Benjamin, a Mr. of Artes, a preacher of good life and conversacion, R. Rathmore. He resideth in Dublin. The curate resideth in the Dioces not farre from thence and intendeth very shortly to reside there. £40.
- Daley, James, of the countrey birth, a reading minister, V. Galtrim and Kilmessan ; P.C. Kiltale and Dirpatrick. £43/6/8.
- Danby, Roger, a preacher of good life and conversacion, chaplen to the right Honble the lo : Viscount Ealy lo. Chauncellor of Ireland, R. Kilmoon. £20.
- Doyle, Edward, a native, a reading minister, now verie aged and sickly, V. Rathregan and Killeen. £30/13/4.
- Davyes, William, in Deacon orders, P.C. Martry ; C. Donaghpatrick. £4.
- Edmonds, Cadwalader, a reading minister of good fame and conversacion, V. Piercetownlandy, Knockmark, and Tara. £36/6/8.
- ffennor, Edward, a preaching minister, R. Balsoon ; P.C. Ardsallagh. He boardeth with the Vicar of Skryne. £14/16/8.
- Fitz Johns, John, a native of the country, a reading minister, R. Cruicetown and Castlecor ; P.C. Kilbeg and Robertstown. £47.



- Fitz Symonds, William, born in the country, in Deacon Orders, of good life and conversacion, V. Moyglare ; P.C. Kilcloane and Ballroddan. £12/10/-.
- Greaves, Thomas, a reading minister of good life and conversacion, V. Killua, Faughly and Rathgraffe ; R. Killwellagh. Killwellagh Rectory is worth £60 ster. per an. but leased in 1605 by John Brennan then incumbent, and Sr. Garrett Moore Knt, now lo. Viscount of Drogheda, patron thereof, and the Reverend father in God Thomas Jones then lo. Bp. of Meath, to Robert Bath of Drumconragh, gent. with all castles, houses, lands, tithes and other duties thereunto belonging, for the Tearme of 61 yeares, reserving yearely the rent of £10 Ir. to the Incumbent. £49.
- Gregge, John, a Mr. of Artes, a good preacher, of good life and honest conversacion, and very paynfull in his ministry, V. Rathmullen ; C. Trim and Rathcore. £86/13/4.
- Griffith, Patrick, born in the country of English parents, a reading minister of good life, R. Trubly ; V. Athlumney. He resideth at Ardmulchan till his house is builded, which is now in hand with. £16.
- Hagly, William, a preaching minister, chaplen to the lo : Moore, of good life, R. Gernonstown ; V. Ardcaith ; P.C. St. Kennies Duleek. £48.
- Hatton, Bartholomew, a reading minister of honest conversacion, R. Killagh. He is a single man, and boardeth with Mr. Edwd. Hatton, his uncle, at Delvin. £13/6/8.
- Hatton, Edward, a Mr. of Artes a preacher of good life and conversacion, R. Clonarny ; V. Castletown Delvin. He resideth sometimes at Castletown Delvin, his rectory standing in the midst of this parish, and sometymes he resideth at another liveing of his in the Dioces of Clogher. £40.
- Haward, Edward, a reading minister borne in the countrie, V. Ballymagarvey ; P.C. St. Marys Duleek. £40.
- Jones, Adam, a young man in Deacon Orders, V. Kilsharvan. £5.
- Jones, Morgan, a reading minister, V. Skryne ; P.C. Assy. £27/18/4.
- Kean, James, a native, a reading minister of good life and honest conversacion, V. Dunboyne and Rathbeggan. £49.

Lees, Thomas, a preaching minister of good life and conversacion, V. Moorechurch, Julianstown and Stamullen; C. Ballygarth. He dischargeth all the cures very carefully. £45.

Lester, William, Dean of Clonmacnoise. There belongeth to the Deane or Deanry of Clonemacknosh much land in the countie of Westmeath and Connaught, and they and all other the profits of that dignity are leased by the now incumbent and £6 per ann. only reserved.

Lisley, Thomas, a reading minister of good life and conversacion, R. Kilbride Pilate; P.C. Kilkenny West and Castletown Kindalen. £11.

M'Grannell, Daniell Oge, a reading minister of the country birth, R. Carrig; P.C. Kilbride Weston and Castlelost. £12/10/-.

Meath, James Lo. Bishop, R. Trim £267; R. Ballymore £50.

Medcalf, William, a reading minister, R. Strokestown; V. Syddan; P.C. Nobber and Ennismoughton. £13.

Mooney, Walter, a reading minister, a native of good life and conversacion, P.C. Brownstown, Folletstown, Staffords-town, and Monkstown. £6.

Mountfield, John, a reading minister of the countrey birth, of honest life and conversacion, and paynfull in his ministry, R. Lynn and Moyliscar; P.C. Enniscoffy, Portloman, and Stonehall; C. Multifarnham. £30/10/-.

Moloy, Neal, a native, a Mr. of Artes, and a preacher of good life and conversacion, V. Fircall. £50.

Moorehead, William, a Mr. of Artes, a good preacher, and of good life and conversacion, R. Almoritia; C. Ballymore; P.C. Moyvore and Killare. He exerciseth the ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the remote Deanryes of Ballymore Loxewdy and Ardmurgher als Ballymurgher, under Mr. William Lilton, official generale of the Diocese of Meath. £34.

Nicolls, Robert, a Mr. of Artes, a good preacher of honest life and conversacion, P.C. Ardbraccan, where he resideth for the use of his ministry and preacheth every Sunday; R. Dunmowe, having none in this parish which come to church. £17.

Parr, Henry, a reading minister, P.C. Lacken, Leney, Kilmacnevin, Kilbixy, and Templeoran. £10.

Pemberton, Myles, Batchelor of Artes, a Preacher of good life and conversacion, R. Castlerickard, where he resideth and serveth the cure diligently ; R. Clonfadforan ; P.C. Killian. £42/10/-.

Phillips, William, Batchelor of Divinitie, of good life and conversacion, and verie painefull in his calling, R. Ardmulchan, Dunsany, and Kilberry ; P.C. Navan. He resideth at Ardmulchan and preacheth every Sunday at Novan. £85/6/8.

Pillyn, Thomas, a Batchelor of divinitie, of good life and conversacion, R. Newtownfertullagh ; V. Ardnurcher. He resideth at Dublin. £22/10/-.

Plunket, Alexander, a native of the countrey, a scoller, a reading minister of good life and conversacion, V. Loughcrew ; P.C. Foyran, Kilpatrick, Drumcree, and Killeagh ; C. Moylough. £21/10/-.

Plunket, Oliver, a native, a scholler, a reading minister of good life and conversacion, R. Clonabraney ; C. Diamor. £5.

Purdam, Gilbert, a reading minister, now absent in England by licence from his Majestie, R. Paynestown and Multifarnham. £60.

Purdem, Richard, born in the countrey but of English parents, a Cambridge man of good life and conversacion, R. Ballygarth, Kilskyre (where he resideth), and Killallon. Out of the rectory of Kilskyre he payeth yearely to the Lo. of Killeene £5 ster, for a pencion belonging to the colledge of Killeene graunted to it in tymes past for the mayntenance of four chaplens. £98/6/8.

Ridgwell, John, a reading minister of good life and conversacion, P.C. Ballyboggan and Castlejordan. £14.

Robynson, John, Mr. of Artes, V. Rathkenny. £7.

Sharpe, Alexander, Mr. of Artes, a preacher of good life and conversacion, V. Clonard ; P.C. Scurlockstown and Killochonnigan. £23/13/4.

Shepperd, Balwyne, a preaching minister of good life and conversacion and Mr. of Artes, V. Dunshaughlin and Trivet. Dischargeth both cures carefully. £25.

Sheply, Robert, a preaching minister, R. Taghmon ; P.C. Durrow ; C. Rathmore. He resideth sometimes at Durrow and sometimes at Rathmore. £10.



- Sibthorpe, William, a Mr. of Artes, a good preacher of good life and conversacion, and very paynfull in his ministry, V. Mullingar and Mayne, £43/6/8.
- Sing, George, Mr. of Artes, a preacher, chaplen to the lo. Primate, of good life and conversacion, R. Killary. This rectory is worth £40 per ann., but is leased to Rowland Plunket of Hearonstowne, gent., for some yeares yet to come for the yearely rent of £8 Irish. He resideth in the Dioces of Armagh.
- Smyth, Nicholas, als Agone, a native, a reading minister, some-  
tyme student in Trynitye Colledge neere Dublin, of good  
life and conversacion, V. Ratoath ; P.C. Dunamore, Kil-  
leglan, and Greenoge. £49.
- Smyth, als Agone, Nicholas, a native, a reading minister of  
good life and conversacion, V. Oldcastle ; C. Lickblae. £9.
- Smyth, Thomas, Batchelor of Divinitie, Chaplen to Lo :  
Viscount Graundison, of good life and conversacion, R.  
Moynalty. He resideth in Dublin. £50.
- Smyth, William, born in Scotland, Mr. of Artes, a preacher of  
good life and conversacion, C. Kells, where he resideth  
for the use of his ministry and preacheth every Sunday ;  
R. Newtown and Knock (having few or none in this parish  
which come to the church) ; V. Kilpatrick ; C. Moynalty.  
£27.
- Smyth, William, an Englishman, Mr. of Artes, a good preacher  
of good life and conversacion, V. Athboy where he resideth  
and is careful of his charge ; V. Girley. £40.
- Sowtherne, Edward, a preaching minister of honest life and  
conversacion, R. Stackallen ; P.C. Fennor ; C. Paynes-  
towne. £21/10/-.
- Stearne, John, a Mr. of Artes, a good preacher of good life and  
conversacion, V. Tisaran and Lemanaghan ; P.C. Kil-  
beggan. £67.
- Tedder, Nicholas, a young man in deacon orders of honest  
reporte, a late Scholler of Trinitie Collegde neere Dublin,  
V. Clonalvy ; P.C. Dowth, Grangegeeth, and Monknew-  
town. £20.
- Travers, Robert, a Mr. of Artes, in Deacons Orders, R. Moylagh.  
He commonly resideth at Tryme. £30.
- Trench or French, James, a Mr. of Artes, a preacher of good  
life and conversacion, R. Clongill, Drakestown, and  
Liscartan. £58.

- Ussher, Luke, Batcheler of Arts, a preaching minister of good life and conversacion, R. Kentstown. He is Archdeacon of Ardmagh, and resideth in the dioces of Ardmagh. £30.
- Warr, William, a reading minister of the countrey birth, V, Killary ; C. Kentstown. He is an old man and hath beene lately long sick, by reason whereof he is not able to attend to his cures. £6.
- White, Thomas, of the countrey birth, a preaching minister of good life and conversacion. R. Slane, Drumconrath, and Donamore. His rectory of Drumconrath is worth £140 ster. p. ann., but is all leased to the lo. Baron of Slane by the now Incumbent dureing his incumbency for £24 p. ann. or thereabouts. £99.
- Wingfield, John, a preacher of good life and conversacion, V. Donaghpatrick. He is now in England. The curate resideth in the Cure of the Martry about a mile of. £13/13/4.

Ussher sums up his account by telling that there were in the Diocese of Meath, two dignities. He refers to the Archdeaconry of Meath and the Archdeaconry of Kells, and seems to overlook the Deanery of Clonmacnoise. There were fifty-one Rectories, sixty-three Vicarages and seventy-nine Curateships, or Cures, belonging to impropriate rectories and others. (These must not be confounded with curacies in the modern sense.) There were forty-three Chapels of Ease. He then tells how "the patrons of every living, and the farmers of the impropriate rectories, are all set down and specified in the first column, whereof such as he recusants are noted with this (✠) mark in the margin." On looking over the list we find that there are no less than one hundred and eleven such marks, which tells us that in all those cases the ancient church property and the patronage of the parish was in the hands of Roman Catholics. It need hardly be added, that such a state of things was by no means calculated to further the interests of the Reformation.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE REIGN OF CHARLES I.

ON the accession of Charles I. the See of Meath was vacant by the translation of Ussher. After a delay of a little more than a year it was filled by the promotion of Doctor Anthony Martin, Dean of Waterford.<sup>1</sup> He was, as Ussher would have expressed it, "of the country birth." He spent some years of his youth in France, and afterwards took his degree in Cambridge. Returning to Ireland he was elected a fellow of Trinity College, and among the under graduates who came to his lectures was the famous Sir James Ware, whose historical works are still of inestimable value to the student of Irish history. Martin came to the See in a time of great trouble and difficulty, and he lived to witness what were perhaps the greatest series of disasters that ever occurred in all her history.

At the beginning of Charles's reign there seemed to be little that in any way foreshadowed the tragic end which was to come so soon. At least, it was so in England. In Ireland there was, of course, that perennial promise of trouble which was never wanting since the days when the first Englishman set foot on her soil. And at the moment it was somewhat accentuated by the issue of a Bull from Pope Urban the Eighth,<sup>2</sup> in which he exhorted the Romanists of Ireland to lose their lives rather than take the oath

<sup>1</sup> Ware.

<sup>2</sup> Mant.



of allegiance to the King of England, giving as a reason that it was framed for the purpose of wresting the sacred sceptre of the Universal Church from the Vicars of Almighty God. At about the same time there entered the country a large number of Religious Orders. In the Diocese of Meath, under the auspices of Dr. Dease, the Roman Catholic Bishop, the Capuchins were introduced into Mullingar and Drogheda, and there were also founded in different parts of the diocese establishments of the Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Cistertians, Carmelites, and Jesuits.<sup>3</sup> These soon began to make their influence felt, and did not hesitate to fan that hatred of England and the English which was always smouldering in the country. We will see later on how the terrible rebellion of 1641 was set on foot under the auspices of these Religious Orders.

The laws concerning Romanism continued, however, in force all this time ; that is to say, they remained on the Statute Book, and occasional attempts were made to enforce them, so that the irritation which they caused was kept alive. In every other respect they were altogether ineffective. They might have been abrogated, were it not for the power of the Puritan party in England, but to do so would, as the King himself puts it, "be soe generally distastefull to the subjects of England, and would give such an advantage to the King's ennimyes here, that itt may nott be granted without apparent danger of ruine to the King's affaires."<sup>4</sup> The truth is that the doctrine of religious toleration is very modern, and was at this time neither understood nor followed by any country in Europe. Indeed it is doubtful whether in practice any part of the

<sup>3</sup> Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*.

<sup>4</sup> Carte's *Life of Ormond*, Vol. V., p. 1.

Continent was in this respect as free from oppression as Ireland was. An author, who writes in 1642 under the initials "M.S.," makes the following appeal to the Romanists :

Shew me any Christian nation (whose commanding prince is of another profession) that ever was so indulgent to a people of another religion ? Did you not (the supreme offices of the Crown only excepted) enjoy all places and privileges equally with the Protestants ? Were not your Catholic mayors (save in Dublin, and there also I have known them chosen, who had their substitutes) in all corporate towns in the kingdom ? Had not your lawyers of both kinds equal freedom both at the Council table and all courts of judicature, uninterrupted or disparaged, to plead your causes, and were they not heard with as much patience and favour as any other ? Had you not your Mass Houses (though not allowed, yet permitted and connived at) in all places to resort to, yea, even in the city of Dublin, in the very face of the State itself ? Did not your Jesuits, friars, and all the rest of your disorderly Orders and Babylonish confused rabble, appear in all places known and uncontrolled ? 5

The author of these words evidently imagined that their tone was conciliatory, and neither he nor any of the rulers at that time seemed to understand that all this liberty by connivance was calculated, not to satisfy the people, but to make them more and more discontented. It was a tacit admission that the laws were unjust, but it was not accompanied, as it ought to have been, by a repeal of those laws. Occasionally too, there was a feeble attempt to enforce the law, but only in such a way as brought ridicule and contempt on the executive authority. Proclamations were issued, but no one seems to have paid them the slightest attention.

As an example of the manner in which the anti-Romanist laws were administered, we may take the

<sup>5</sup> *A Discourse Concerning the Rebellion in Ireland*, London, 1642.

case of the Proclamation issued by the Lord Deputy on the first of April (a suitable day !) 1629. In words it was as intolerant as the greatest bigot could desire. It said, " That the late intermission of legal proceedings against Popish pretended titular archbishops, bishops, abbots, deans, vicars-general, jesuits, friars, and others of that sort, who derive their pretended authority and orders from the See of Rome, in contempt of his Majesty's royal power and authority, had bred such an extraordinary insolence and presumption in them. as he was necessitated to charge and command them in his Majesty's name, to forbear the exercise of their Popish rites and ceremonies."

This was severe enough, and if carried out would have abolished the exercise of Roman Catholic worship all through the country. But the Proclamation was regarded by those against whom it was directed as nothing more than a huge joke. The Lord Deputy gives an account of how it was published and observed. He says; " I have received information, both of the unreverend manner of publishing the late proclamation at Drogheda, and the ill observance of the same since it was published. For the first, that it was done in scornful and contemptuous sort, a drunken soldier being first set up to read it, and then a drunken serjeant of the town ; both being made, by too much drink, incapable of that task (and perhaps purposely put to it,) made the same seem like a May-game. And for the latter, that there is yet very little obedience showed thereto by the friars and priests ; only that they have shut up the fore-doors of some of their mass-houses, but have as ordinary recourse thither by their private passages, and do as frequently use their superstitious service there, as if there were no command to the contrary : those mass-houses being continued in their



former use (though perhaps a little more privately) without any demolishing of their altars.”<sup>6</sup>

While thus the Romish party was becoming every day more confident and aggressive, the Church, on the other hand, was becoming less efficient. The churches were falling out of repair, the clergy were, many of them, non-resident, and religion was at a very low ebb. Carte tells us that the Church of Ireland was at this time in a deplorable condition. The livings were very poor, in consequence of impropriation; “and as scandalous livings naturally make scandalous ministers, the clergy of the Established Church were generally ignorant and unlearned, loose and irregular in their lives and conversations, negligent of their cures, and very careless of observing uniformity and decency in Divine worship, in a country in which they were endangered on the one hand by an infinite number of obstinate recusants (as almost all the old natives were), and on the other by a shoal of factious and irregular Puritans.”<sup>7</sup>

This description refers to the church in general, and not to the Diocese of Meath in particular; there is, however, every reason to fear that the state of things there was not much better than in other parts of the country. Meath probably was not much troubled with “factious and irregular Puritans,” for it was in the North of Ireland that these most abounded; still the fact that some of her clergy were able to satisfy Cromwell’s “triers,” and obtained positions as preachers of the Gospel under the Commonwealth, would point in that direction. But if the Puritans were few, we know that there was then, as now, a large preponderance of Roman Catholics, including nearly all the gentry, and not a few of the patrons of Church livings. Those

<sup>6</sup> Mant.

<sup>7</sup> *Life of Ormond*, Vol. I., p. 137.

who held to the Protestant faith were continually in danger from the violence of the populace by which they were surrounded. Life and property were at times insecure, and bands of robbers, sometimes forty or fifty strong, ranged through both Meath and Dublin, "breaking into houses by night, and robbing by day."

We have already seen that the great majority of the livings in the diocese merited well to be described as "scandalous." In this respect, however, some effort was made by way of improvement. The credit for all that was done is mainly due to Archbishop Bramhall, who, in conjunction with Lord Deputy Strafford, secured the restoration of many of the endowments which had been alienated from time to time. By their influence two Acts of Parliament were passed in 1634, one an "Act for the Preservation of the Inheritance, Rights, and Profits of Lands belonging to the Church and Persons Ecclesiastical," and the other an "Act which enableth Restitution of Impropropriations and Tithes, and other Rights Ecclesiastical, to the Clergy, with a restraint of alienating the same, and directions for Presentations to Churches."

King Charles himself seems to have been sincerely anxious to benefit the Church in every possible way, and the opportunity of doing so was afforded him in the case of some inappropriate parishes which were in the hands of the Crown. Since the time of the dissolution of the monasteries, the tithes of these parishes had been granted on lease to various lay "farmers," who collected the income, paid the Crown a small rent, and had the rest of the tithes for themselves. There was a vague kind of obligation imposed that they should provide for the spiritual care of the parish by appointing a vicar, but this obligation was in many

cases evaded, and even when acknowledged, the income provided was miserably inadequate. Several of these leases had fallen in, and on the advice of Bramhall, the King, instead of granting them afresh to laymen, gave them to the vicars of the several parishes, who thus became rectors. In the twelfth year of his reign, he made a grant by which the Diocese of Meath benefited considerably. In it he says: "We have received from the Right Reverend and much esteemed prelates of that our kingdom a lively representation of the miseries of many of our loving subjects occasioned by the want of an able and loyal clergy, sufficiently provided, to reside upon their charges in every parish, and for a good help and advancement thereof, they have humbly besought us to bestow those appropriations which are yet in the Crown and undisposed, so as the same may bring no diminution to our revenue, nor considerable prejudice to the rights of our imperial Crown of that our realm, as by the presentation of the true state of these benefices they have made to appear to yourself (the Lord Deputy). Now, considering how much this tendeth to the advancement of piety, true religion, government, and civility, and that others by our example may be encouraged to like good works in this kind, we are graciously pleased to grant this request, and do freely give unto the Church the said appropriations in such manner as is desired." <sup>8</sup>

The following is a list of the parishes of the diocese of Meath, which are mentioned in this grant:—

Dunshaughlin	Staholmcock	Ballyloughloe
Laracor	Skryne	Athlone
Kilmore	Kilpatrick	Tisaran
Milltown	Rathregan	Clonmacnoise
Dunreagh	Ratoath	Lemanaghan

<sup>8</sup> *Appendix to the Report of the Irish Church Commission, 1868, p. 181.*



Donaghmore near	Piercetownlandy	Dunboyne
Navan	Tara	Ballinagarvey
Trevet	Kilcleagh	Walterstown
Knockmark	Creekstown	Balrodden
Ballynerowl	Killaglan	Kilclone
Rynagh	Brownstown	Gallow
Fore	Staffordstown	Assy
Kilnegarenagh	Navan	Rataine
Ballymaglasson	Clonmacduff	Ardsallagh
Greenogue	Drumlargan	Moymet
Ardbraccan	Ballyfeighan	Kilbeg
Kilshine	Kilglyn & Raddanstown	Robertstown
Donamore-juxta Greenoge		

In every case a "Crown Rent" was reserved, equal to that which would have been paid by a lay farmer, but notwithstanding this, the grant must have been of the greatest benefit to the diocese. In a few cases, it would appear from subsequent returns, that the King's benevolent intentions were not carried out, or else, by some means or other, it was managed that the impropriations again got into lay hands. Bishop Jeremy Taylor tells us that this happened, not only in Meath, but in many parts of the country. "The goods of this world," he says, "are called 'waters' by Solomon: 'stolen waters are sweet,' and they are too unstable to be stopped: Some of these waters did run back from their proper channel, and return to another course than God and the laws intended." In this way some of the incomes were again lost, but in most cases the endowments thus secured were enjoyed up to the time of disestablishment.

Two years later a further grant was made to the Diocese of Meath in the shape of glebe lands of considerable extent for the parishes of Ardnurcher, Rynagh, Kilcleagh, Killoughey, Lynally, Ballyboy, Kilnegarenagh, and Killegally,<sup>9</sup> in each case on the condition

<sup>9</sup> *Irish Church Commission Appendix*, p. 182.

that a house should be erected within three years of the date of the grant. The disturbed state of the country, followed by the disorganisation of the Church under the Cromwellian regime, made it impossible to exact this condition, and as a consequence the building was not done for many years afterwards. In the case of Ballyboy and Lynally the condition was never fulfilled.

In after years, both these grants were of the greatest benefit to the Church in Meath. The immediate result, however, was very little indeed, for days of great trouble were at hand, when the clergy were glad to escape with their lives, and had little chance of securing for themselves any part of their income. In the meantime, the power of the Romanist party was daily increasing, and tokens were not wanting, though they seem to have been quite unheeded, of the approach of the storm which was so soon to break over the whole country.

There had been no Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath from the time of the deposition and imprisonment of Bishop Walsh, down to the closing years of the reign of James I. In the year 1622 Doctor Dease was consecrated in France to this office, after which he came to Ireland, convened a synod of his clergy and continued to rule the diocese until 1648. He was a man zealous for everything that pertained to the welfare and advancement of his Church, but he mixed himself little with politics, and his influence was altogether against those revolutionary movements which were characteristic of his time. He disapproved of the rising in 1641, though he was powerless to prevent it, for the whole body of the Roman Catholic clergy, led by the Pope's legate, was against him. When the Roman Catholic Bishops of Ulster met at Kells under the presidency of the Archbishop of Armagh, Doctor

Dease was the only one who stayed away ; and when Rinuccini, the Pope's nuncio, was doing his best to keep the flame of sedition alive, and to frustrate all movements towards peace, Bishop Dease did not hesitate to oppose him in every way, thereby incurring his bitter enmity. When at one time a report was circulated that the bishop was dead, the nuncio openly rejoiced at it, and wrote to Rome, "The Bishop of Meath is dead at the age of eighty, to the great gain of this kingdom, for he was a man of almost heretical sentiments, and I had been obliged to threaten to send him to Rome, even at his advanced age." When afterwards he found that this was a false report, he wrote again : "The Bishop of Meath is not dead but has been spared to try the patience of the good."<sup>10</sup> If there had been a few others like Doctor Dease at the time, much suffering and calamity might have been avoided.

<sup>10</sup> Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE REBELLION OF 1641.

THE seventeenth century was the era of religious wars. It seemed as if the bitterness of sectarianism had infected the air of all Europe, and made men forget that they were brothers and fellow-citizens. It was scarcely to be expected that Ireland would escape the contagion. There no element was wanting that could rouse the worst passions of men. Misgovernment, confiscation of land, oppressive laws feebly carried out, an executive that had not the courage to enforce its own ordinances—these were enough, and more than enough, to embitter a religious war when it broke out in this unhappy country.

It is the aim of a certain class of writers in the present day to deny that the insurrection of 1641 can be rightly described as a religious war. We are told that it is "misleading to speak of a massacre of Protestants by Catholics, instead of English by Irish : they were attacked, not as heretics, but as oppressors—not as Protestants, but as plunderers."<sup>1</sup> It is hard to understand how any one who has studied the documents of that time can come to such a conclusion. It is no doubt easy enough to show that apart from religion the political state of the country might account for all that happened ; but this is only *a priori* reasoning, and counts for little when placed beside concrete facts.

<sup>1</sup> Prendergast, *Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland*, Preface to the Second Edition.

And the facts are these: the conspiracy was first concocted in the Franciscan Abbey of Multifarnham, under the auspices of the Roman Catholic clergy. The question which they debated when planning the rebellion was stated to be "What course should be taken with the English and all others that were found in the kingdom to be Protestants." They drew up there a series of resolutions abolishing Protestantism, and giving the government of the country altogether to the Romanists. A little later, what is known as the "Catholic Confederation" was formed, the very name of which declared its purpose, and in one of its manifestoes it speaks of "the war which now in Ireland the Catholics do maintain against sectaries and chiefly against Puritans." Still later, the Pope's nuncio assumed the whole direction of affairs, and thereby gave the Pope's official sanction and countenance to the movement, and a considerable sum of money was contributed by his Holiness to furnish the "sinews of war." Then, in order to excite the religious zeal of the multitude, a report was industriously circulated that the English were determined to hang all those who refused to go to church, and it was said that a letter had been found—no one seemed to know when or where—which stated that this would be the case. The people were, therefore, assured that their one and only hope was to be beforehand with the Protestants, and to kill them before they had been able to carry out these supposed threats. That political motives were mixed up with all these, it would be idle to deny, but with these facts before us we are forced to the conclusion that those who directed the movement regarded it as being primarily religious, and that the object which they placed before them was the destruction of Protestantism.

These same writers use all their ingenuity to prove that there was no general massacre of Protestants at that time. Here again the contemporary evidence is only too convincing. No doubt, the numbers have been grossly exaggerated. One writer speaks of two hundred thousand having been killed, another puts the number at one hundred and fifty thousand, and another says thirty thousand. It may at once be admitted that all these are exaggerations. The rebels were given to boasting, and this in itself may account for some of the exaggeration, for when they told their Protestant prisoners that so many thousand had been slain in one place or another, the natural tendency in those days of terror was to believe them.

We have, however, in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, thirty-three large volumes of depositions made at the time, by those who were eye-witnesses and sufferers, and from a careful examination of these, it has been computed that about four thousand were killed, and that about eight thousand besides died from ill usage. Attempts have been made to throw discredit on this evidence. Mr. Haverty, in a note to his *History of Ireland*, says: "Crowds came with their stories, but their evidence was nearly all hearsay, and but few of them were sworn. Great numbers of them were poor women and servants, illiterate persons, unable to sign their names; and it may be suspected that the mere parole evidence of such persons, under the circumstances, could be of little value. They allowed free scope to their imagination; everyone wished to exceed his neighbour's story; and most of them could only tell what they heard others say while they were prisoners with the Papists." One cannot help wondering if Mr. Haverty ever read a line of the documents which he so freely criticizes. I do not



profess myself to have gone over the thirty-three volumes, but I have carefully examined those that refer to Meath and Westmeath, and I cannot conceive of anyone who has read them using language such as has been quoted above. When a servant, even if she was not able to write her name, deposes that she has seen her master murdered, and gives time, place, and circumstances ; when that evidence is corroborated (as it is in many cases) by the evidence of others, who also describe what they saw with their eyes ; when wives give evidence that they have seen their husbands killed before their eyes, and tell that they themselves were turned adrift in the middle of winter without a shred of clothing—when the evidence is of this kind, it is hard to see how it can be cast aside except on principles which would make the writing of history an impossibility.

The number of the witnesses whose evidence is given must also be considered. It is easy enough to get an assembly of people to assent to even the most preposterous statements. Or if a document is drawn up which has only to be signed, it is easy to get signatures in abundance of those who only vaguely understand what they are putting their hands to. But when thousands of people, in different parts of the country, tell their story, each one by himself, and when these witnesses all agree, it is only those who are determined not to be persuaded who will reject such evidence.

The task before us at present is happily not that of telling the history of that unhappy rebellion. We have only to consider those incidents which took place within the Diocese of Meath, and which influenced the condition of the Church of Ireland in that district. The ordinary histories make little mention of Meath,

for the principal incidents of that insurrection took place in other parts of the country. As we go on, however, we will see that the sufferings of the Protestants even in this district were very great, and from hence, perhaps we may have some idea of what a terrible time of trial it must have been in other parts of the country, less favourably circumstanced.

At the first breaking out of the rebellion, it was principally confined to the north of Ireland. News of what was going on, however, quickly spread through all the County Meath, and the Protestant inhabitants, being then, as now, comparatively few, were made to suffer from the hostility of their neighbours. In Navan, "after the rebellion was known generally, all the Papist's houses were sett upon a merry pin, dancing, singing, and drinking, as if hell had bin broken open among them." The vicar, fearing violence, and learning too that "the country people were up, and robbing to the very walls of the Navan," went to the portreeve and to some other of the burgesses, and urged them to put a watch at the gates, but their sympathies were all with the rebels, and they refused to take any steps to defend the town. The vicar threatened to report them to the State, but they only ridiculed his threats, and shortly afterwards the populace of Navan attacked his house, robbed him of everything that he possessed; and attempted to take his life, so that "he was glad to fly with his wife and two children disguised, and to leave one child behind him." <sup>2</sup> At the same time there was a general robbery of all the Protestants in the town, two of whom were killed by the mob. Several others were threatened that they would be killed if they did

<sup>2</sup> *MS. Depositions*, T.C.D., from which most of the information following is extracted.

not go to Mass, and we cannot be surprised to find that some of them were "fain to promise" to do so, in order to save their lives.

In the surrounding country districts, things were, if possible, in a worse condition. "There was scarce an Englishman on the further side of the Boyne in the whole County of Meath left unpillaged in the first eight or nine days after the 25th of October, 1641, and that by the County Meath men themselves;" that is to say, all this happened before the rebels actually made their appearance in the county, and was the work of the populace, excited by the news that had come of the doings in other parts of the country.

Meanwhile the rebels were assembled in some force not far off, their rendezvous being at Cavan and Virginia. From thence they advanced into the County Meath, and secure as they were in the sympathies of the majority of the people, they had no difficulty in surprising the towns of Trim, Kells, Navan, Ardbraccan and Athboy. In all these places the local authorities were in their favour, and the few troops found in each town were many of them ready also to join with the insurgents. Wherever they went, the Church of Ireland clergy were the first objects of their hostility. Several of them were killed, they were nearly all robbed, and they all had to fly for their lives.

Among those who lost their lives was John Sharp, the curate of Kells, a "minister and preacher of God's sacred word." His story is told for us by his widow, Margery Sharp, who relates that her husband had made an attempt to fly to Dublin for succour, but was caught by the insurgents, and left so grievously wounded, that he was unable to proceed. In this condition he was shortly afterwards found by another company of



the rebels, who "cruelly and wilfully murdered him in the place where they found him."

A namesake of his, and probably a relative, Alexander Sharp, the minister of Trubly, was robbed of all that he possessed. In his deposition he says that, "the rebels threatened that if they could catch him, they would pull his skin from his flesh, and his flesh from his bones, till they made him confesse moneys unto them, for they would use him worse than those whom they hanged and butchered at Trim. Whereupon he repayred to Dublin, with four of his children, who were only able to travaile along with him, but was compelled to leave his wyfe and fyve young children under the hands of the rebels, and knoweth not what is become of them as yet."

The case of Mr. William Metcalfe, the Vicar of Syddan, was equally hard. In his depositions he tells how he was "robbed by the rebels about a fortnight after the insurrection broke out. He was imprisoned with his wife and eight children and three of his grandchildren in the castle of Syddan for nine months or thereabouts, where they were with scarcity and very meane food ; but, especially by God's great bounty and goodness, kept alive, and then at length were enlarged by Lord More and the English army. They, the said rebels, gave him several blows with a cudgel, which made him ly long in his bedd ; and compelled him to goe with them to a thorne bushe, where they threatened, but did not, hang him. They slew as many of the Protestants (neither sparing sex nor age) as they possibly could, and among the rest, the parish clerk of Ardee, slain in his own house. They forcibly brought deponent into the grave-yard at Siddan, to show them where, and how many, English were there buried for xxty yeares then last

past, that they might be turned out of their graves, but the deponent refused to make known the same unto them."

Occasionally the work of robbery and murder was diversified by efforts of proselytism. Daniel Wilson, a Protestant living in the Parish of Galtrim, relates how first of all he was robbed by his neighbours, then, when the rebels came, his house was attacked once more, but "he told them they had come too late, for that the inhabitants had robbed him before they came; and Captain Houler, answering, said that he, this deponent, might choose whether he would be robbed or no, for (sayd he) if you will goe to Masse, you shall loose nothing. To which this deponent answered that if this be their way to convert people (as you call it), much good may doe you with what you have."

In Westmeath, the influence of Doctor Dease, the Roman Catholic bishop, restrained the rebels to some extent. Yet even there it was not possible to prevent cruel murders and robbery. The Vicar of Mullingar was robbed of all his goods; the same thing happened to the minister of Rathconrath. The Rev. Thomas Fleetwood, curate of Kilbeggan, tells how he was himself robbed and taken prisoner with some of his children. His captors stripped him of his clothes, and threatened to kill him. They stripped some old men and women and sent them adrift perfectly naked in the middle of winter. They murdered, in the church-yard of Athlone, a Mr. Barton, son of a Protestant clergyman, and then "turned his wiffe and children out of ye towne, which children perished and dyed, for that the cruell rebels would neither harbour nor suffer any other to relieve them, but threatened to burn the houses of such as should give them any succour."

One of the most horrible tragedies of the time happened at Kilbeggan, and is deposed to by John Naghten, a resident in that town. He tells that "the rebels in the streets of Kilbeggan wounded Jane Browne, an English Protestant, and her daughter, Margaret Browne, and at the same time hanged, at Kilbeggan, a young boy called John Lothar, and then returning to those wounded women, they there made a great hole in the ground, and therein having thrown the said boy, they also then and there forced and threw into the same hole said wounded women; and whereas the one of them, viz., the said Margaret, had a sucking child, and desired that if they would bury her alive, that they would also bury with her her said suckling child, because she knew they would kill or starve it. They refused that request, but then and there forcibly threw clay and stones upon both those women, and in most inhuman and barbarous manner buried them both alive, and the poore infant starved and died in the streets."

These extracts are quoted not from any desire to retail horrible stories, but because without them it would be impossible to show to what a low ebb the Church in our diocese was reduced in that miserable period. The depositions from which they are taken are full of such recitals, and prove as plainly as anything can be proved that the aim of the insurgents was to destroy our Church, and to banish every Protestant from the land. Not all the sophistry of the most ingenious special pleader can overcome this plain testimony of eye-witnesses, who gave their evidence within a few months of the occurrences which they relate.

The immediate result of the rising was that the whole Diocese of Meath was left practically without



church clergy, and as the insurrection was followed by the Cromwellian regime, this state of things continued for a period of close on twenty years. It was, therefore, the greatest blow that our Church ever sustained—so great a blow that many imagined that she would never rise again. We shall see, however, that God in His own good Providence delivered her in the end out of all her afflictions, and though other troubles were quickly to follow, yet never again was our Church brought so low as at this unhappy period.

It remains only to add that with the flight of the clergy has to be chronicled also the flight of the bishop. At the opening of the rebellion he was attacked in his house at Ardraccan, and was forced to take refuge in Dublin. He had formerly been a fellow of Trinity College, and thither he made his way. The provost, an Englishman named Richard Washington, left his post, and would not stay any longer in Ireland, and Bishop Martin after a while took his place, and continued to hold it through troublous times. When the Book of Common Prayer was proscribed by order of Cromwell, its forms were still used in the College Chapel, and when many accommodated themselves to the new order of things, Martin was still found among the faithful. He died of the plague which raged in the summer of 1650—it is said, in great poverty,—and was buried within the precincts of the university.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Mant.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE REBELLION OF 1641 (*Continued*).

WE have seen in the last chapter how great were the sufferings which the Protestants of Ireland were called on to endure at the hands of the rebels in 1641. But when we come to consider incidents such as those which are there described, a question naturally arises, why such things should have been allowed without any effort being made for the protection of the loyal inhabitants of the land. It will have been noted that the rebels appear as marauders rather than as insurgents, and that the stories are all of murder, robbery, and ill-treatment of individuals, but none of battle or conflict. Meath was the most settled county of the Pale, and the King's authority was supposed to prevail there, even when it was impossible to assert it in more backward parts ; but the rebels—one had almost written the rabble—had it all their own way ; they spoiled on every hand, and there was no one to prevent them. When we come to answer the question, we are forced to conclude that the blame for the disasters of that time does not wholly rest on the ignorant and unthinking populace, but that the major part of it must be placed to the account of that English party which posed as the Protestant party *par excellence*, but which never hesitated to sacrifice the Irish Protestants, when the exigencies of party struggle in England seemed to require it.

When the rising first took place, it owed its success greatly to its unexpectedness. No one was prepared for it. But when the initial consternation had passed, this very fact might have shown that it was not as formidable as it appeared to be. An unexpected rebellion is necessarily one for which inadequate preparation has been made, and is, therefore, a case in which prompt measures are most likely to be successful. This was clearly seen by some members of the Privy Council in Dublin, who advised that the rebels should be immediately attacked, and not allowed time to make themselves pikes, or to be supplied with arms from abroad. Counsels, however, were divided, and the more timorous part prevailed, so it was decided to confine themselves to defensive operations, fortifying Drogheda and Dublin, and leaving the rest of the country to take care of itself.

Even this need not have caused undue delay, for, after all, England was not so very far off, and if the authorities there had wished to nip the rebellion in the bud it could easily have been done. But that was exactly what the English Parliament least desired. They saw in the rebellion a means of furthering their own interests. It brought discredit on the King, it roused the passions of the Protestant party in England, it kept loyal troops occupied who might otherwise have served the King's cause, and it gave them the opportunity of alienating those very troops from the service of their royal master. The Protestants of Ireland had to suffer, but this was a small matter in their eyes compared with the accomplishment of their own schemes. The King sent a message to the English Parliament acquainting them with the state of affairs. Their answer was that they would take the sole management of the Irish war independently of



His Majesty. They fulfilled the obligation by delaying as much as possible the sending of succour or supplies.<sup>1</sup> The result was that the rebels had time to organize themselves; they asked for and received help from abroad; and as they were allowed to continue on their course unchecked, they imagined that they were invincible, and that they had only to go on in the same way in order to overturn British rule, and to banish every Protestant from the land.

The leaders of parliament recognized very clearly that it was a religious war, though, of course, other motives besides religion were largely mixed with it. They were determined that this aspect of it should be accentuated. Accordingly, while they left the Protestants of Ireland to their fate, they showed their zeal for the cause by putting into force the penal laws in England. The Irish rebels, imagining themselves to be victorious because no real effort was made to cope with them, were more than ever convinced that their one hope of safety lay in the successful prosecution of the revolt in which they were engaged, and their clerical leaders were not slow in pointing out to them what little mercy they might expect if once the English again obtained the upper hand.

The principal noblemen and gentlemen of the County Meath at this time were Roman Catholics. They were, however, of English stock, and were loyal to the Crown. They had very little sympathy with this insurgent movement, for it was directed against them almost as much as against the Protestants. A great part of their wealth consisted of abbey lands, which had been granted to their ancestors under Henry VIII., and renewed to them by succeeding monarchs. It was the avowed aim of the rebels that

<sup>1</sup> Carte's *Life of Ormond*.

all these lands should be restored. Out of two hundred and forty-three parishes in the Diocese of Meath, they possessed the patronage of one hundred and two, and this meant in nearly every case that they were in receipt of the rectorial tithes. All this, they knew, would have to be relinquished if the rebellion was successful. Then they were altogether too powerful to be hurt by penal laws. They enjoyed full religious liberty—by connivance, it is true, and not by right. But their position was such that while they would agitate for better laws, they were not at all prepared to take up arms, and engage in an enterprise in which they had nothing to gain, and a great deal to lose. As soon as they heard of the rebellion, a number of them repaired to Dublin, and placed their services at the disposal of the government. The lords justices at first accepted the offer, and provided them—though sparingly—with arms. Then they became suspicious, and took the arms away again. A little latter they summoned these gentlemen to Dublin to consult about the public safety. The invitation was not responded to, because, their offered assistance having been declined, the gentlemen feared that this new move was only a ruse to get them into the power of the government, so that they might be imprisoned and perhaps their estates forfeited.<sup>2</sup>

The position of these Roman Catholic gentry now became exceedingly difficult. The country was becoming more and more disturbed, and the insurgents roamed as they pleased without let or hindrance. The government gave no protection, and by the withdrawal of arms had put it out of the power of the gentlemen to defend themselves. Then the rebels threatened to attack them and destroy their property

<sup>2</sup> Carte.

if they did not join in the movement. Thus in the end they were almost forced to take part in the rebellion. A number of them met the insurgent leaders on the Hill of Crofty, near Duleek, and demanded of them "for what reason they had come armed into the Pale?" The reply was that "the ground of their coming thither and taking up arms was for the freedom and liberty of their consciences, the maintenance of his Majesty's prerogative, in which they understood he was abridged, and the making the subjects of this kingdom as free as those of England." Lord Gormanstown, then, in the name of the Roman Catholic nobles, answered, "Seeing these be your true ends, we will likewise join with you therein."

A week later these lords of the Pale met again on the Hill of Tara, and drew up a formal response to the invitation of the Lords Justices. They explained that their reluctance to go to Dublin was due to their distrust of Sir Charles Coote, who was in command there, but they expressed their readiness to meet commissioners from the Lords Justices at any other place, "in convenient distance from the command and power of the said Sir C. Coote." They also added that "their lives and estates were not so dear unto them as their loyalty and faith to his Majesty, the least breach whereof was never harboured in their thoughts."

These expressions of loyalty, used alike by the insurgents, and by the lords of the Pale, are worthy of note. When the rising first took place it was a rebellion, pure and simple; but as time wore on, and it appeared that there were two parties of English—the royal and the parliamentary—some of the leaders of the movement thought to strengthen themselves by alliance with the royalists. These gave out that



the King was himself secretly on the side of the rebels. There do not seem to have been any real grounds for the assertion, but it was eagerly accepted by the parliamentary party in England, who saw at once how much it strengthened their position. Amongst the insurgents it introduced an element of dissention, which in the end broke up their organization. The adherence of the Meath gentry seemed at first to be an accession of strength; in reality it helped more than anything else to the disarrangement of the plot.

During all this time Drogheda was in a state of siege. If the rebels, instead of pillaging in Meath, had advanced at once to the attack, the place must inevitably have fallen into their hands. Even Dublin could have made but a poor defence, so inadequate was the garrison, and so feeble the administration; but the time spent in taking the few towns in Meath, gave opportunity to prepare for the defence in both places. The insurgents expected that Westmeath would have followed the example of Meath, and that a thousand men would have come from thence to aid in the siege of Drogheda. Bishop Dease, however, exerted all his influence to prevent them, and prevailed on the Earl of Westmeath, and other members of the Nugent family, to hold aloof. For this he fell into great disfavour alike with his fellow ecclesiastics and with the leaders of the popular movement.

The next step was to give formal ecclesiastical sanction to the cause of the rebels. A synod was, therefore, convened on the 22nd of March, 1642, at Kells, which was presided over by Hugh O'Reilly, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh. All the bishops of the province attended, with the exception of Doctor Dease, who neither came in person nor sent a proxy to appear for him. This synod passed a

resolution approving of the war, and also a vote of censure on Bishop Dease for his opposition. He was ordered to submit within three weeks, under pain of incurring a suspicion of heresy, and also of being synodically informed against to the Pope, and in case of refusal, the synod declared him to be suspended *ab officio*.<sup>3</sup> Under such great pressure Doctor Dease gave way, but his adherence to the cause by no means took away from his good influence ; on the contrary, he became a kind of leader of the Anglo-Irish party, who were from the first opposed to the extreme measures which others pursued, and who became after a time the ruling force on the supreme council of the Catholic Confederation, making peace eventually in direct opposition to the advice of the Roman Catholic Bishops, led by the Pope's Nuncio.

The Synod of Kells was followed by the more important Synod of Kilkenny, in which an oath of association was drawn up, and arrangements made for the carrying on of the war. Appeals were made to the Pope, and to the Kings of France and Spain for help. A kind of parliament, consisting of two houses, was established. It is probable that the extraordinary success of the Covenanters in Scotland led the members of this assembly to hope that by uniting the Irish in a common league they would be able to extract concessions from the King, and there can be little doubt that they would have to a great extent succeeded if it had not been for the overthrow of the monarchy by the Puritan party in England.

Towards the end of the year 1643 a cessation of arms was proclaimed, and the representatives of the insurgents made an agreement with the Duke of Ormond to that effect. The Roman Catholic clergy

<sup>3</sup> Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*.

bitterly opposed this truce, but they were over-ruled by the Anglo-Irish gentlemen who had joined the confederation. In thus opening negotiations with them, King Charles had hopes that he would be able to secure for himself help in that conflict with his parliament that was soon to end so disastrously for him. The result of these negotiations, and the subsequent political events, need not here be recounted. It is worthy of remark, however, that although there was supposed to be peace in the land during the "cessation," there was no effort made to restrain the intolerance of the populace, and that it continued to be impossible for a Protestant to exist in the County Meath. The following deposition, made by the Reverend Robert Nicholl, the minister of Skryne, will throw some light on the state of the country at this time. He says that he "was by the rebels deprived and despoiled of all his means, and flying for relief to the city of Dublin, lived there with his family in great want and misery, untill the cessation of armes was proclaimed, after which time he, being prest with want, repaired and returned to his old dwelling place at Skreene aforesaid, and in the church there exercised his ministry to such as would come to the church (being to his great grief now but a few)." He was then attacked by some of the people in the neighbourhood, who were "furnished with dangerous and unlawful weapons, viz., swords, pistolls, and skeanes;" and they "did in the night time forcibly attempt and fall upon the breaking of the said house, and eftsoone broke and burst open the doors thereof, and with a fearful noise entered into the place where the deponent and his family were, and then most cruelly did beat, wound, and evilly intreate, and put them into much fear, threatening to kill them, for



that they durst be so bold as to come among them to dwell and then and there robbed this deponent and his family of all his and their corn, provisions, victualls, and clothes, leaving them stripped to their very shirts and smocks, and destitute of all comfort and relief.”<sup>4</sup>

During all this time it was the policy of the parliamentary party to promote discontent amongst the King's soldiers in Ireland, by withholding their pay, and leaving them deficient in supplies. Large sums were raised in England for the support of the army in Ireland, but it found its way to the country in small and inadequate doles, and much of it was appropriated to the expenses of the parliamentary army in England. Some officers drew up a remonstrance which they presented to the Irish Privy Council, complaining of the way in which they had been treated, and asking for the payment of arrears. The answer of the council was to make an order that everybody should bring in half his plate to be converted into money for the present relief of the officers of the army. This order had no effect, so by way of showing an example, the members agreed at their next meeting that they would send in their own plate on the following day. The Bishop of Meath was not present at this meeting, but was asked to join with the others in making the offer. His reply, however, was “that he had neither plate nor anything else to make money of but a few old gowns, his house being pillaged and burnt in the beginning of the troubles, and all that he had seized upon by the rebels.” Bishop Martin was a staunch royalist, and as such was out of favour with the Lords Justices; they, therefore, took this opportunity of venting their spite against him. They summoned

<sup>4</sup> *MS. Depositions, T.C.D.*

him to appear before their lordships and the committee sent from the Parliament of England, and by them he was committed to prison. He petitioned the board the next week, "representing the troublesomeness and expense of his confinement, and desiring to be removed to his own dwelling house, till they should think fit to give order for his further release-ment." His petition, however, was of no avail, and he continued in custody, until he appealed to the King, to whom he represented that, notwithstanding his being a privy councillor, and having a place and voice in Parliament, "he still remained in restraint, to the undoing of himself and his poor family, the disheartening of others of his place and function, and the rejoicing of many busy spirits, who under colour of piety disturbed the peace and prosperity of God's church." Shortly after this the bishop must have been set at liberty, as we find him sending, in conjunction with some other members of the Privy Council, a letter to the King on the necessity of sending money and provisions for the support of the army.

At the very beginning of the troubles the Pope had sent a special messenger to the insurgents, with his benediction on the work which they had undertaken. In 1645 he was superseded by a more important officer, John Baptist Rinuccini, Archbishop of Fermo, who came as "Nuncio Extraordinary." He brought with him arms and ammunition, as well as a present of money, to assist in carrying on the war. When he arrived he found negotiations in progress for the conclusion of peace, and he set himself at once to put every obstacle in the way. In this he was unsuccessful, for the lords of the Pale proved too strong for him. He ordered the members of the Supreme Council of the Catholic Confederation to be imprisoned, and

carried the clergy with him in his opposition to the peace. But it was all of no avail. In the end he issued sentence of excommunication against the Supreme Council, and placed under an interdict all those towns in which the peace was accepted. But the age in which an interdict was an effective punishment had passed away, and the only result was that he had himself to leave the country, being more detested by his own co-religionists than were the very Puritans themselves.

These negotiations for peace were altogether between the King and the insurgents. No account was taken of the parliamentary army. It, therefore, did not mean that there was to be a cessation of hostilities, but only implied that the insurgents and the King were to make common cause. In return, the monarch was to grant them the major part of their demands. One of their first stipulations was that they should enjoy all churches and church livings that they had already in possession. The King expressed himself willing to grant them this demand. As far as the Diocese of Meath was concerned, this would have meant the complete blotting out of Protestantism, for every church and church living was already in their hands, and they were determined that no church minister should be allowed to remain any longer in their midst. Like many others in that age, they were loud in their demands for religious liberty, but the liberty that they looked for was to be extended only to themselves, and all the rest were to be excluded.

During all these years the country continued to be in a state of disturbance. Meath was possibly less disturbed than some other parts, but it also had its battles, and suffered not only from the rebels, but also from the soldiers who were supposed to be



deliverers. Trim was again and again the scene of conflict. It was taken by the rebels at the first outbreak of the war, but was recovered by Sir Charles Coote in 1642. Shortly afterwards it was again attacked. The attack was repulsed, but Sir Charles lost his life, shot it is not known whether by the enemy or by one of his own troopers. After this it became a base from which parties went out to "spoil and kill" the rebels, but it did not prevent them from taking the castles of Killalon, Balrath, Ballybeg, Bective, Balsoon, and Ardsallagh. Athboy also was besieged by the insurgents, but they were forced to raise the siege. In Westmeath, the towns of Mullingar and Ballymore were burned, and there was an engagement at Rathconnell. These were the most important events, but independently of them there was continual going to and fro of bodies of rebels or of soldiers, rendering life and property insecure all through the diocese.

The most important engagement of all took place at Dungan's Hill, near Laracor, in 1647. The following description of the fight is taken from the *Down Survey*: "On the 8th of August, 1647, being the Lord's Day, happened a very greate battaile betweene the English and the Irish. Collonell Michaell Jones commanded the English, and one, General Preston, the Irish. The advantages that the Irish had were as many as men could have against men. Their ground was high, their artillery ready planted, their men ready drawn up in battallia, immured with mudd walles, the sunn and winde in their reare, two woods and a large bogg through which the English must march if they intended to fight. The English in a marching motion, and had not roome to drawe upp. But it pleased the Almighty Disposer of all things to magnify Himselfe

by giving the English a signall mercy that day in a glorious victory over the Irish, where they lost both bagg and baggage, and 5,800 and odd men slayne, 900 prisoners were taken, several lords and earles and the best of their gentry slayne and taken, with their lieutenant general, and diverse other officers.”<sup>5</sup> In a pamphlet published in London at the time, it says that not more than five hundred escaped, while on the side of the English “some were wounded, but not twenty slain.” It adds, “never did men carry themselves with more resolution and gallantry than did ours, both officers and soldiers, deserving much more encouragement than hitherto they have found, most of them having scarce meat to eat or clothes to put on. . . . This was the most signal victory with the greatest loss to the rebels that ever was gained in Ireland since the first conquest thereof by the English. For which the Lord make us truly thankful.”<sup>6</sup> One is led to suspect that in accounts such as these there must be some exaggeration, for it is hard to see how so large an army could have been annihilated at such little loss. Probably it was more of a mob than of an army. In any case there must have been exceedingly bad generalship on the part of the Irish leader.

Things entered on a new phase when the King met his death on the scaffold. All the hopes of the Anglo-Irish party were at once dashed to the ground, and the concessions which they had wrung from the monarch were absolutely worthless. They had made themselves doubly obnoxious to the Parliamentary Party by joining with the insurgents, and by siding with the King ; and then they had large estates in the

<sup>5</sup> Record Office, Dublin.

<sup>6</sup> “An exact and full relation of the great victory obtained against the rebels at Dungan’s Hill in Ireland, August 8, 1647, by the forces under the command of Colonel Michael Jones.”—London, 1647.

rich plains of Meath, the forfeiture of which would provide ready means for the payment of military expenses. They had staked their all on the losing side, and nothing now remained to them but ruin and disappointment.

The Parliament had now nothing to gain by keeping Ireland in a state of turmoil. It was, therefore, determined to put down the insurrection, and restore peace to the country. Cromwell himself undertook the work, and he did it with an iron hand. The terrible energy with which he accomplished his purpose left an impression on the Irish people which to the present day is not effaced.

On Wednesday, the 1st day of August, 1649, a public fast was kept by order of parliament throughout England and Wales, "to call upon God for a blessing upon the Lord Lieutenant Cromwell's forces against the Papists, and others, the enemies of the Parliament of England, in Ireland." A fortnight later he landed in Dublin, bringing with him a force of nine thousand foot, four thousand horse, together with artillery, stores, and money for the campaign. The Irish soon learned to their cost that they had a different man to deal with from any that they had ever met before.



## CHAPTER XXI.

### CROMWELL.

CROMWELL'S campaign in Ireland was "short, sharp, and decisive." He remained in the country from the middle of August in the year 1549, to the twenty-ninth of May in the year following, and in that time he accomplished the complete reduction of the island. His first act was to besiege Drogheda, which had been fortified by the Duke of Ormond, who, still loyal to his sovereign, took up the cause of the young man who was afterwards to become King Charles II. Cromwell directed his attack on the wall of the churchyard of Saint Mary's, where marks of the breach that he made may still be seen. He broke down the tower and steeple of the church, and it was at this point that he made his entry into the town. The details of the struggle that ensued have often been told, and need not here be repeated. The massacre of the garrison and of the townspeople that ensued has found its apologists, but must for ever remain as a stain on the Protector's memory. It undoubtedly accomplished its purpose in driving terror into the hearts of the insurgents, who from the dilatory tactics of so many years were quite unprepared for such ferocious vigour. The rest of Cromwell's campaign in Ireland has little concern with Meath, and, therefore, does not come within the range of this history. Ruined castles here and there are said to have been destroyed by him, but such traditions are altogether untrust-

worthy. Indeed, except in connection with the siege of Drogheda, it is doubtful whether Cromwell ever set foot in Meath at all. Of course, detached bodies of his army were scattered in different places. These, we may be sure, left no strongholds that could be utilized by the enemy, and their acts are naturally in many cases credited to their master. That his soldiers did not hesitate to desecrate our churches is shown by the account in the *Down Survey*, which tells us that the chancel of the church of Kells was used as a stable for the horses. In one of these pamphlets which at that time supplied the place of newspapers, and which was published in London in 1650, soon after Cromwell's return, there is a long list of his victories.<sup>1</sup> The only entries which refer to Meath, with the exception of the account of the taking of Drogheda, are the following :—

On the 12 of Septemb. his Excelencie reduced the garrison of Trim.

The Lo. Broghill took Oldcastle town and garrison.

A party from Trim marched out beyond Molengar in the County Westmeath, where they defeated a party of the Irish, killed divers, and returned with a prey of 300 cowes and 40 garron horse.

Castlejordan, Kinnegad, and Arnomullen taken by Sir Charles Coote.

Trim was summoned, and some taken prisoners.

Trim, it will be noticed, is mentioned three times, and the first mention seems to imply the presence of Cromwell himself, but it is doubtful if the account should here be taken literally. As far as we can gather from other sources, there was practically no resistance made there against him, and it is not probable that he was himself present. In connection

<sup>1</sup> *A History or Brief Chronicle of the Chief Matters of the Irish Warres*, London, 1650

with this town, the following curious story, referring to the "Yellow Steeple," is recorded in the *Down Survey*. It does not, however, fit in with any of the incidents mentioned in the above quotation. "The steeple stood undefaced till the year 1649, in which there happened a siege, which was gallantly withstood by the then governor, whose command and name was Major William Cadogan, till by the judasme of one Martyn (who was then intrusted with the steeple, which overlooked, and soe consequently commanded the castle) was betrayed, which forced a surrender both of towne and castle. But suddenly, after it being regained, and the aforesaid governor re-invested, he caused one side of it to be blowne upp, and the other remaynes standing to this day for a memorandum of treachery to after ages."

Shortly after this, in the year 1650, a plague broke out in Ireland, and a proclamation was issued by Ireton "concerning the present Hand of God, in the visitation of the plague, and for the exercise of fasting and prayer in relation thereto." It was in this epidemic that Bishop Anthony Martin succumbed. When the Duke of Ormond surrendered Dublin to the Commissioners of the English Parliament, they "at once abolished the liturgy, and substituted the Directory in its place. Bishop Martin had the courage to disregard this order, and used the Book of Common Prayer in the College Chapel, and preached against the heresies of the time with an apostolic liberty in a crowded congregation. He died in the College in 1560 of the plague which then raged in Dublin, in great poverty, and was buried in the ante-chapel near the north wall, under the old steeple."

Though peace was restored to the country, and there was no longer fear from the hostility of the



Romanists, yet for the Church the prospects were more gloomy than ever. Cromwell and his party hated the Church almost as much as they hated Romanism, and were determined to do away with bishops and liturgy, and to appoint, instead of the episcopally ordained clergy, "godly ministers" of their own way of thinking, who were "experimentally acquainted with the working of the Spirit of the Lord." The forms of appointment of several of these ministers are preserved, and they throw a curious light on the religious aspect of the Protectorate. A few specimens will doubtless interest the reader.<sup>2</sup>

Here is the appointment of Mr. Samuel Edwards to the Parish of Athboy. It will be noticed that there is a careful avoidance of any expression that would imply that he was in Holy Orders, or that the place in which he was to officiate was a church. "Upon reading ye Report of ye Committee for Approbation of Ministers, dated ye 22nd instant, whereby it appears that they have conferred with Mr. Samuel Edwards, and find him well testified unto by Sir Erasmus Phillipps, Sir Hugh Owen, and other ye Commissioners for Ejection of scandalous, ignorant, and insufficient ministers in South Wales, as also by several ministers living thereabouts, and likewise that they find him to be a person gifted with knowledge and utterance, and (as they hope) experimentally acquainted with ye working of ye Spiritt of ye Lord : upon consideration had thereof, it is thought fitt and ordered, That the same Mr. Samuel Edwards bee and hee is hereby appointed to preach ye Gospell att ye publique meeting place at Athboy in ye County of Meath, to ye inhabitants thereof, and parishes united and adjacent thereunto (who have quetnd [? requested] for him),

<sup>2</sup> These documents are in the Record Office, Dublin.

untill further order ; and for his paynes therein, Dr. Loftus is to take care that he be maintayned out of ye tithes of ye said parishes, where he is hereby settled, and to assigne ye said tythes unto him accordingly."

It has often been remarked that the Puritans were utterly destitute of the sense of humour. This must certainly have been the case with the individual who drew up this document, otherwise he would have recognized those suggestions which naturally occur to the mind when we read that it was the Commissioners for the ejection of scandalous ministers in Wales, who had to certify that Mr. Edwards was good enough for Athboy.

Another example, the appointment of Mr. Zephaniah Smith to the district of Corkerry in the County of Westmeath, shows what minute details of personal history were taken note of, and how, then as now, "former weaknesses" were regarded by some people as rather a recommendation than otherwise in one who was to undertake the preaching of the Gospel. The document deserves to be quoted in full. It is as follows :

Whereas the Protestants of the Barony of Korkerry in the County of Westmeath have by their humble petition sett forth that Mr. Zephaniah Smith hath since September last taken greate paines and dispens'd the Gospell amongst them with much ability and satisfaction, and by his frequent labours in preaching hath put a seale to his ministry by his holy life and conversation, and making it their earnest request that ye said Mr. Smith may be settled amongst them, and that a competent maintenance may be appointed for his encouragement, which being taken into consideration, as also sundry certificates from severall churches of Christ and other sober and godly people, testifying his abilities and other qualifications for the work of ye ministry, and likewise by ye humiliation and due sense of former weaknesses appearing in him, hoping that the said Mr. Smith may through Grace in Christ be instrumentall (especially in this juncture of tyme) to bring much honour to Almighty God

and to doe much good unto His people by being fixed in some publike place, moreover finding that ye said barony is att present destitute of a preaching minister, It is though fitt and ordered that the said Zephaniah Smith bee and is hereby appointed to preach the Gospell to the inhabitants of the said Barrony of Korkerry and places thereabouts, where his paines may be most effectuall, till further order, and that he be allowed the yearely sallary of one hundred punds, to commence from the 24th of June last, it being nevertheless declared that when a generall inspection shall be had of ye publike maintenance for ministers, the allowance made Mr. Smith shall be lyable to such regulation as shall be found meet. Dated at Dublin the 24th of August, 1659.

With all their examination and testing, they were sometimes disappointed in the men that they imagined would be such an improvement on the old parish clergy. The following documents relating to the Parish of Navan reveal a curious episode in the administration of church discipline. First of all, we have the suspension of Mr. Richard Bourk, who, it may be supposed, took the place of the Vicar, Mr. Roger Puttock, who had to fly from the rebels in 1641. It is as follows :—

Whereas, upon examination and confession of Mr. Richard Bourk, preacher att ye Navan in ye County of Meath, as also of ye concurrant testimonie of divers creditable persons (who lately saw him shamefully overcome with drink as towards noon day he passed throught ye streets in Dublin), it manifestly appears that the said Richard Bourk is a common haunter of alehouses, and soe intemperately given to drink as renders him to be of a loose and vain life and conversation. And whereas an humble address hath this day been made unto ye Board by ye ministers now assembled in this citty from several parts of this nation, expressing their sense of such a notorious miscarriage, and how it may reflect upon the ministeriall calling, without bearing their testimony not only against soe great publike wickedness in all sorts of men, but principally in a minister, who ought to be an example to the flock, and therefore praying that the said Mr. Bourk may be suspended ye exercise both of his office and the performance of any ministerial duty in this nation, until he



become penitent for that sinne, The Lord Deputy and Councel (holding itt not only their duty to encourage and countenance able and faithfull ministers of ye Gospell, whereby the word may be effectually preached, and the people instructed in all godliness and honesty, but also to purge ye church of such as are scandalous, by whom religion is defamed, good men offended and ye soules of many not a little endangered, and that when such are discovered, a timely remedy may be applyed) have thought fitt and ordered that the said Richard Bourk bee and is hereby (upon ye testimony aforesaid) declared to be a person scandalous in his life, and fitt to be ejected from his charge att ye Navan aforementioned, that his former stipend be discontinued, and deprived of any other incumbency if allowed him as a preacher, and that he be not permitted to exercise any such ministeriall office or duty within any parte of this nation. Whereof the said Richard Bourk is to take notice, as also ye respective justices of ye peace, at their next generall quarter sessions, to the end that by such publication others may be admonished, and ye said Bourk receive a fuller conviction in himselfe, and through unfeigned sorrow and compunction of heart, evidence as publicuely a repentance as he hath occasioned a just and publike offence. Dated at ye Councell Chamber, Dublin, this 11th May, 1658.

On the seventeenth of June following, Doctor Jonathan Edwards was appointed to take the place left vacant by the deposition of Mr. Bourk. One cannot help speculating whether or not he was an ancestor of his illustrious namesake, but the documents do not give us any assistance. The deed of his appointment is still preserved, but as it abounds less than the other similar deeds in those peculiar theological expressions which render them interesting, it need not here be quoted. It appears from it that the English inhabitants of Navan asked for his appointment, in order that he might "preach the Gospell to the inhabitants thereabouts, who are now become wholly destitute and deprived of that most necessary flood of their soules, by the miscarriage of Mr. Richard Burgh, their late minister." Of what happened

next we have no record, but there must have been some opposition to this appointment of Doctor Edwards, for we have an entry shortly afterwards, as follows :—  
 “Mr. Cardiffe silenc’t, and Dr. Edwards to officiate att Navan without ye lett or interruption of ye said Mr. Cardiff.<sup>3</sup> Vid. our order dated 8th July, 1658, in their books.” This is not the date of Doctor Edward’s appointment, and must refer to some other order, of which a record has not been preserved. Here the documents fail us, and the story must be left unfinished, but it is to be presumed that Doctor Edwards continued to preach at the Navan until the Restoration.

We may conclude this chapter with a list, as far as it can now be made out, of the ministers who were employed by the Commonwealth in the Diocese of Meath. The source of information is the account of “Ministers’ Allowances” which is given in the manuscript entitled *An Establishment for Ireland*, preserved in the Record Office.

#### MINISTERS’ ALLOWANCES.

Precinct of Trim.			per ann.		
			£	s.	d.
Drogheda	Michael Briscoe .. .. .	.. .. .	0200	00	00
	(This name is crossed out, and the note added “in England”)				
Kells	Ambrose Jones .. .. .	.. .. .	0100	00	00
Nobber	Samuell Stephenson .. .. .	.. .. .	0060	00	00
	(The salary here is crossed out, and the note added, “Sall. suspended from 29 7ber 58, vid. L. E. 17 9ber 58.”)				
Tercroghan	Alexander Sharp .. .. .	.. .. .	0041	12	00
Skreene	Robert Nichols .. .. .	.. .. .	0040	00	00
Duleek	Thomas Bladin .. .. .	.. .. .	0100	00	00

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Cardiff or Kerdiff was an episcopally ordained clergyman. See the Succession of Clergy in the Parish of Navan in the Appendix of this work.

		per ann.		
		£	s.	d.
Trim	Jeremy Benton .. .. (Note added, "in England.")	0150	00	00
Stamullen	James Meyler .. ..	0080	00	00
Killucan	Henry Dodwell .. ..	0129	00	00
Navan	Richard Bourk .. .. (this name is crossed out.)	0100	00	00
	Hugh Hannah att Knock ..	0060	00	00
	Nicholas Meyler att Dardistown (vide fol. 30 for ye rest of ye Ministers of this Precinct.)	0040	00	00

## PRECINCT OF ATHLONE.

Samuel Cox of Athlone .. .. (Note added, "removed to Dublin.")	0200	00	00
Randolph Adams of Mullingar ..	0150	00	00
Richard Blackburne; James Downes .. .. (The name "James Downes" is in a later hand.)	0100	00	00
Zephaniah Smith £100 per ann. fro 24th June 59, to be regulated when thought fitt. (This is in a later hand.) .. ..	0100	00	00
Robert Fullerton of Ballymore .. .. (Note added, "removed to Shruell.")	0100	00	00
James Cary in ye Barony of ffertullagh in Co. West- meath .. .. (This is in a later hand.)	0080	00	00
Robert Lorky. Abby at Tristernagh ..	0080	00	00
Ezekiell Webb att Athlone till Mr. Cox has returned from 25th December 56 .. ..	0160	00	00
William Maxwell att Clonmasknois in ye Kings County from 29th March 59 .. ..	100	00	00
Thomas Coffy removed from ffinglasse in Co, Dublin to ye halfe Barronyes of Ballycowan and Ballyboy in Kings County .. ..	0080	00	00
James Stearine in ye Barrony of floor in ye Co. West- meath .. ..	0080	00	00

## ADDITIONAL NAMES ON FOL. 30 (referred to above.)

John Hooke att Drogheda till Mr. Jenners returne out of England, from 25th March 1657 ..	120	00	00
Dr. Jonathan Edwards att Navan .. ..	0120	„	„



						per ann.		
						£	s.	d.
Dr. ffaithful Geale att Drogheda from 25th March								
58	..	..	..	..	..	0200	00	00
Samuel Edwards att Athboy upon Tythes.								
John Smith att Morgallion in the Barrony of Mor-								
gallion in the County of Meath from ye 25 De-								
cember 1658	..	..	..	..	..	0100	00	00

If this list is to be considered as in any way complete, it would appear that the provision made was anything but adequate, and that large districts were left without any preacher or clergyman. Some of the names here given are those of church clergymen, who were in possession of their parishes before the time of the rebellion. It is to be presumed that in accepting appointments under Cromwell they agreed to forego the use of the Prayer Book, and to adopt the forms of worship which were favoured by the Puritans. There can be little doubt that through all the time of the Protector's rule the use of the church service was strictly prohibited. As for the preachers who were appointed by Cromwell, we have not the information at our disposal to say how they fared at the Restoration, when church order was once more established. In most cases, no doubt, they had to relinquish their positions. One of them, at all events, if not more, continued to hold his place, for an inscription on the church plate of the Parish of Kells records that it was presented by Ambrose Jones, whose name appears in the above list, but was nevertheless appointed Archdeacon of Meath when the diocese was once more organised. We have no means of knowing whether he was ordained at the time of the Restoration, or whether he was already in Holy Orders when he was appointed to "preach the Gospell" at Kells.

The following appointments of schoolmasters and

of a schoolmistress, were made during the Commonwealth period :

PRECINCT OF TRIM.						per ann.		
						£	s.	d.
Thomas Watson att Trim from ye 25th December 1658	..	..	..	..	..	0030	.	.
John Tunbridge of Trim	..	..	..	..	..	0030	00	00
Elizabeth Pressick Schoole Mistress at Trim	..	..	..	..	..	0010	00	00
Laurence Jones to be Schoolmr. at Drogheda from 29th September 57	..	..	..	..	..	0020	00	00

#### ATHLONE.

John Challener att Athlone till further order (or until Mr. Erasmus Smith establish an allowance for him) to commence from ye 24th June 1657	..	..	..	..	..	0030	00	00
Gerrald Birne att Mullingar from ye 25th June 57 to rec.	..	..	..	..	..	0020	00	00

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE RESTORATION.

THE Restoration of King Charles II. brought with it a restoration of church order both in England and Ireland. The King was proclaimed in Dublin on the fourteenth of May, 1660, and the occasion was one of great demonstrations of joy, not only there, but in all the principal towns of the kingdom. There was at first some doubt as to what the future church policy was to be. The Puritan party was still very powerful, especially in the army, and under their auspices an address to the Crown was presented by the non-episcopal ministers in and about Dublin,<sup>1</sup> in hopes of getting their model of government established. They were few in number, for the church livings were not rich enough to tempt many of them, but they relied on the influence of their friends in England, who might be powerful enough to persuade the King. The bishops and clergy who were still left, as soon as they became aware of this, drew up a counter petition, asking that the order of bishops and the use of the liturgy might be continued. There was still a third party, the Roman Catholics, who had obtained certain concessions from Charles I., when he had made peace with them in 1648. These concessions had come to nothing, in consequence of the usurpation of Cromwell, and the death of the King, but it was now urged that they should have full force. As we have already seen, one

<sup>1</sup> Carte, *Life of Ormond*.



of these concessions was that a considerable number of the churches should be handed over to them. Under the guidance of the Duke of Ormond it was at once decided that the Church should be restored to its former position, and that steps should be at once taken for the filling up of the vacant bishoprics. This course was rendered the easier by the fact that it required no legislation. No Parliament had been assembled by Cromwell, and the changes which he made were done by his own arbitrary act, without any legal authority. It was, therefore, decided that the liturgy should be at once restored, and the temporalities given back to the Church in as full and ample a degree as she had possessed them in the year 1641.

Meath had been without a bishop since the flight of Anthony Martin, at the beginning of the rebellion. The See was now filled by the translation of Henry Leslie from Down and Connor. This Leslie was a Scotchman, and had been Chaplain to Charles I. He became afterwards Dean of Down, and in 1635 was consecrated to the episcopate of that Diocese. He is said to have been "a man of vigorous mind, and large acquirements, conversant with the history and writings of the ancient ecclesiastical fathers, and well acquainted with the constitution and qualities of the primitive church catholic, the features of which he saw reflected, and earnestly admired and loved them, in the national churches of Britain."<sup>2</sup> He was a devoted royalist, and was faithful to Charles I. in the days of his adversity. Notwithstanding this, it is said that he was allowed by Cromwell an annuity of one hundred and twenty pounds out of the revenues of his See. He was an

<sup>2</sup> Mant

old man, and in failing health, when he was translated to Meath. Probably it was considered that he was no longer able to cope with the difficulties of such a diocese as Down, where dissent was strong, and where new difficulties had sprung up in connection with those ministers who had taken possession of the churches during the Protectorate, and who were prepared to give trouble before they would either relinquish their posts, or accept the discipline of the Church of Ireland. At all events, Leslie survived his translation for a very short time, as he died in the following year. It is impossible to say whether he ever entered on the active duties of his episcopate in Meath. He seems to have lived mostly in Dublin, where he died on the tenth of April, 1661.

Bishop Leslie was succeeded by Doctor Henry Jones, who was translated from Clogher. Bishop Jones had a somewhat remarkable career. He was the son of Lewis Jones, Bishop of Killaloe. His first dignity in the Church was the Deanery of Ardagh, from which he passed by exchange to the Deanery of Kilmore. He held this latter office under the episcopate of the famous Bishop Bedell. He was in Kilmore when the rebellion of 1641 broke out, and was employed by the rebels to deliver a remonstrance from them to the Lords Justices in Dublin. In the disturbed state of the country the embassy entailed no little danger and difficulty. His wife and children were kept by the rebels during his absence as hostages for his return. At the end of ten days he came back having complied with their request. After this he made his escape to Dublin, and was able to render good service to the government by giving them warning of the intended attack on Drogheda—a warning which practically secured the safety of that

town. Shortly after this (in 1645) he was consecrated to the Bishopric of Clogher. In the troubles that followed he was a sympathiser with the parliamentary party, and when Cromwell came to the country, he and some of his family made common cause with the Protector. His brother was Colonel Michael Jones, one of Cromwell's chief officers, and he himself, laying aside for a time his episcopal office, became scout master to the army. It is even said that "he was a formidable swordsman; and in hand to hand fights with the foe, many reeled and fell beneath the blows of the warrior bishop." He was also employed by the government to take the examination of Protestants who had survived the fury of the insurrection, and to ascertain their losses. When Cromwell died he transferred his allegiance to King Charles II., and thus, amid all the varying changes of the time, he managed to secure the favour of whatever party was in power. Borlase is supposed to refer to him when, in relating the ordination of twelve bishops in Saint Patrick's Cathedral, in 1660, he says, "Some who in the late wars moved extrinsical to their functions were not allowed to lay on hands, lest a question might be raised as to the legitimacy of the ordination, although the eminence of their parts, and the strictness of their lives, were exemplary." In Mason's *History of the Cathedral Church of Saint Patrick*, however, his name appears as one of the bishops consecrators who officiated on that occasion. He held the See of Meath from 1661 to 1681, in which latter year he died, and was succeeded by Anthony Dopping, who was translated from Kildare.

Bishop Dopping was one of the most eminent of the prelates who have filled the See of Meath. He was an Englishman by birth, but was educated in



Dublin, first at Saint Patrick's Free School, and afterwards at Trinity College, where at the early age of nineteen years he was elected a Fellow. Seven years later, he was appointed Rector of the Parish Church of Saint Andrew, and in 1678, being then thirty-five years old, he was consecrated Bishop of Kildare. He was an eloquent preacher, and his sermons, three volumes of which, in manuscript, are preserved in the Library of Trinity College, are well reasoned, interesting, and convincing. It would appear, from indications contained in these books, that several of these discourses were delivered again by someone into whose possession they had come nearly a hundred years after they had first been preached. Quotations will be given from these sermons later on, not only as specimens of the preaching which was admired in those days, but also on account of the light which they throw on the church history of the time.

Ware, in his *Account of the Bishops of Ireland*, seldom goes beyond the bare recital of a few biographical details. In the case of Bishop Dopping, however, he becomes almost eloquent. He says, "Anthony Dopping, Bishop of Kildare, was translated to Meath the 14th of January, 1681. He was made Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dublin, and one of his Majesty's most honourable Privy Council. He continued one of the number till all the Protestant lords were struck out of the council in the year 1689. He resided in Ireland during the whole time of the late revolution, where he saw his country reduced to the brink of ruin, and almost entire destruction brought upon Church and State by the tyrannical oppression of the Romish party; but still he supported the sinking Protestant interest with great constancy and resolution, applying frequently to the government in

its behalf, and speaking with extraordinary eloquence, boldness, and honesty, in the then House of Lords, against the unjust proceedings of King James and his parliament. He lived to see the distressed Protestant Church of Ireland supported by the gallant forces of Derry and Enniskillen, and delivered by King William the Third, of ever glorious memory, and restored to its happy, peaceful, and flourishing condition, and himself to the enjoyment of the several dignities he formerly held, both in Church and State."

Under the regime of the Protector a great change had come over the Diocese of Meath. The majority of the people were still Roman Catholics, but there was introduced amongst them a body of settlers who had served under Cromwell, and were now rewarded with grants of land. Amongst the upper classes the change was more complete. Up to the time of the rebellion the principal families of the gentry were Romanists, but as they had joined with the insurgents, their estates were now all forfeited, and in their place came officers of the army, and others who had rendered service to the Commonwealth, as well as "adventurers," who had advanced money, and were repaid for their loan with Irish land. It was expected by many that these would be dispossessed at the Restoration, and the old proprietors brought back but even if Charles had wished to do this, he scarcely felt sufficiently secure in his dominion to risk their enmity. These new-comers introduced quite a new element into Irish Protestantism, the influence of which is felt to the present day. They were not men who had any great attachment to the Church—many of them would be pleased if the "godly ministers" of the Cromwellian period had continued to preach as before—but after the Restoration they accepted

the church ministrations, and probably attended the services in the various parishes.

We can only say, "probably," for it is not easy for us now to tell how far it was possible for them to do so, even if they were inclined. A destruction like that which had befallen the Church could not be repaired in a short time. Churches that had been wrecked by the insurgents remained in ruins for many years. Some of them were never rebuilt. It was a very long time, indeed, before it could be said that the Church had recovered from the injuries that had been sustained during that unhappy period.

In after years, these Cromwellian settlers and their descendants became the most loyal men in the country; but at first they were too fresh from their revolt against Charles I. to be satisfactory subjects for his son. There was no open sedition amongst them, but they were very suspicious of the King, and were at every moment ready to charge him with a favouring of Popery. The strength of their discontent may perhaps be to some extent measured by a sermon which Bishop Dopping preached at the time, urging them to loyalty. From the language that he employs it is clear that he considered such an exhortation most needful.

He takes for his text the passage in Jeremiah 'xxix. 7) in which the prophet tells the people to "seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray unto the Lord for it, for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace."<sup>3</sup> He points out that the reference is to Babylon, where the Israelites were captives, and where false prophets had been stirring them up to rebellion. Hence he draws two conclusions: first, that there never will

<sup>3</sup> *MS. Sermons of Bishop Dopping, T.C.D.*



want false teachers and impostors among the people, who will endeavour to supplant them in their loyalty to their prince ; and secondly, that it is the duty of subjects under an oppressing prince to be quiet and submissive to his authority ; that they are not to defend themselves by force of arms, nor resist by power, upon the real or supposed fears of his invading either their liberty or their religion. He points out that this was the command given by Jeremiah to the Jews, that it was the doctrine taught by Saint Paul, that it was the principle adopted by the early Christians, and that it has been the constant opinion and sense of the Church of England. " Those who rebel against the King," he says, " are none of the sons of the Church of England. They borrow their principles and their practices from Rome or Scotland or Geneva, and are either acted by the Jesuit or the fanatick." He speaks, in conclusion, of the fear of Popery, which was the cause of much of their dissatisfaction, and shows that it was ill-founded, and he adds : " I advise you, therefore, my brethren, to consider seriously of these things, and venture not upon such methods and expedients as may in all probability bring upon you the infamy that you fear. Let it be sufficient that we have already brought one King to the block by the pretended fear of Popery, when it was not near us. O, let us not a second time shake the throne and sceptre of another. Let us rather behave ourselves like good Christians, and dutiful subjects, by seeking the peace of the kingdom wherein we dwell, and praying unto the Lord for it ; for in the peace thereof we shall have peace."

The " faint praise " which he here bestows upon King Charles, and the argument in favour of loyalty, which resolves itself into an exhortation to make the best of a bad job, do not speak much for the attach-

ment to the house of Stuart which was felt by the bishop or by those to whom his discourse was addressed. Yet he was faithful and loyal, not only to Charles but also to his successor, King James, as long as they actually held sway, in this respect carrying out the principles of his sermon ; but we cannot be surprised that he readily transferred his allegiance to King William, as soon as that monarch had established his authority. Curiously enough, we have another sermon on the same text, which the bishop preached in Saint Patrick's Cathedral, on the 26th of October, 1690. He then developed the subject somewhat differently, for his object was to show that the rule of William III. should be accepted. His points are : First. That the subjecting of a nation or people to a foreign power is a work of God Almighty's providence. Secondly. That there is a time when a people so subdued are bound in duty to submit to the power of their conqueror, notwithstanding their allegiance to their former prince. On this point he lays down that "all the allegiance of the subject is founded on the protection of his prince, no man being bound to obey a power that either cannot or will not protect him in his life and fortunes." Thirdly. That the measures of this submission do consist in seeking the peace of the kingdom that has them in subjection, and praying unto God for it. Fourthly. That the doing is founded on the strongest reason and the highest providence imaginable, it being the only way to serve our own quiet and prosperity, for in the peace thereof we shall have peace.

It will be seen that in the interval between the preaching of these two sermons the events of the period had caused him to modify considerably his opinions as to the divine right of kings. But the difference in sentiment between the two discourses is

not so great as appears at first sight. His principle is that of loyalty to the *de facto* government, whatever it may be. Hence, while James was King he was loyal to him, but when that monarch was dethroned, he was equally loyal to his successor.

In developing the first of his four points, he has these curious observations :

Nor has he only appointed them [kings] their periods in respect of place, but in respect of time and duration. It is a common observacion among politicall writers that the periods of five hundred and seven hundred years are always fatal to monarchies and kingdoms, because they bring great changes and alterations along with them. It was five hundred years from the monarchy of Moses to the death of Saul, from the returne out of the captivity of Babylon to the death of Christ, from the return of Ezra that restored the Jewish government to the time of Vespasian that destroyed it ; and it is now five hundred and eighteen years since the conquest of this kingdom by Henry wherein we have some occasion to hope for an happier change and alleviacion of affairs than our ances ors ever yet enjoyed. I am sure that the necessity of the kingdom do require it, and the gasping condition both of Church and State plead strongly for it, and the late earthquake that we have felt seems to be an intimation from Providence to call us to it.

A diocese like Meath can never have been severely Puritan. The fact that several of her old clergy continued to officiate under the regime of the Protector is sufficient evidence that, although in all probability they abandoned for the time the use of the *Book of Common Prayer* and adopted the *Directory of Public Worship*, yet they taught no new doctrines, but simply went on as much as possible in the old way. So also, the Restoration brought little change. It gave peace and security, no doubt. It brought back the liturgy and the service to which churchmen had been so long accustomed, but there was no violent rebound such as England witnessed at the time. There restraint



had become a burden, and when it was removed, men were ready to rush to the opposite extreme. No such revulsion took place in Ireland, and least of all in places like Meath. At the same time, we cannot say that there was any great revival of church life. The fabrics were for the most part allowed to remain long in ruin. Bishop Williams of Ossory estimated that through Ireland, not more than one in seven was restored, and there is no reason to suppose that Meath was any better than the rest. Some years later, but still in the episcopate of Bishop Dopping, we will see that the diocese had made but little progress towards recovery.

In the few cases in which the Puritans wished to continue their own forms of worship, they received from Dopping a strenuous opposition. A case in point is that of Sir Hercules Langford, of Summerhill, under whose auspices a Presbyterian Church was established in that village, which was still in use until a recent period. The Vicar of Laracor, writing on the 14th of May, 1683, addressed the following letter to the bishop:—

My Lord,

Your lordship was pleased to command me to give you notice if Sir Hercules Langford should still continue to keep up the conventicle at his house at Summerhill. There is not only a meeting kept there still every Sunday, but the other day, as I am informed, their preacher, Mr. Tate, took so much upon him as to baptize a child which was born in the parish. This being a matter something extraordinary, I thought fit to advertize your lordship of it, and to crave your directions what to do in it. I know indeed that if either the parents of the child or their pastor be proceeded against, and any way censured or punished for this action, it will presently raise a loud cry among the brethren, how that we are more indulgent to papists and idolaters than to them, though for my part, notwithstanding all the errors of the Church of Rome, I am satisfied that her

priests are sufficiently qualified for the administering of Baptism which I am in some doubt of concerning their presbyters. But I only propose the matter to your lordship's consideration, and will exactly follow whatsoever directions your lordship shall please to give me.

Your lordship's most obedient servant,

EDW. SYNGE.

The bishop thereupon wrote to Mr. Tate, the preacher referred to, in the following terms :

Sir,

I am informed that you take a liberty to exercise your ministry in preaching and baptizing in my diocese. I hope you are not so ignorant of the law provided against such transgressions as not to know the penalty of it, and I presume you have so much charity for your selfe that you will not easily put your selfe upon the danger. I desire, you therefore, in point of freindship and civility, to desist for the future, or else, if you must needs take the liberty to persist in your unlawful practices I shall take the liberty to see you punished for it; and if notwithstanding the laws of the land, you think yourself obliged in conscience still to preach, I must tell you that I look upon myself obliged in conscience to punish you for it. I hope you will consider the evil consequently that may and will attend you, and do that which is safe and prudent, especially since it is recommended by a person who will punish no man without a previous intimation.

ANTH. MIDENS.

There is a further letter from Mr. Synge, telling the bishop the result of this expostulation. He says that Mr. Tate had not preached last Sunday. Sir Arthur Langford had him as tutor to his children, and would not allow the people to come to his house any more, but at the same time complained that they spent their Sunday afternoons idly and vainly. Mr. Synge goes on to promise that he will have a sermon on Sunday afternoons as often as he can. Heretofore

he had preached "every fourth Sunday (being as as often as my ability could reach to)." He adds: "The family of Summerhill used to come to hear me both morning and afternoon when I preached, and after that go to hear Mr. Tate, so that I believe it will be a difficult matter to satisfy them with sermons."<sup>4</sup>

This "short and easy method with the dissenters" was by no means calculated to increase the bishop's popularity. Years afterwards he was reproached with his hardness towards them, and it had no small influence in preventing his further advancement in the Church.

Bishop Dopping appears to more advantage in the part which he took towards providing the Bible in Irish for the inhabitants of the country. He had long correspondence with the Honourable Robert Boyle on this subject, and he helped him both with advice and with money. The Irish New Testament was submitted to him, and he gave it his hearty approval, but adds that there will be difficulty with those who discourage the Irish language, and "for the want of good laws for the banishing of the priests and fryers" from among the people. "As for my own part," he goes on to say, "I will contribute to the design what I can, leaving the event to the Divine Providence, professing myself to be one of those that will cheerfully encourage anything that tends to the promotion of religion and the good of souls. And in order to that, I am resolved to confer the first convenient living in my donation upon some minister that can preach in Irish, and to send him as an itinerant in my diocese, and sometimes to countenance him with my presence and authority. This I take to be my duty, and shall therefore willingly discharge it."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Dopping Correspondence*, preserved in the Library at Armagh.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



We have no means of knowing whether he ever carried out his intention of having an Irish speaking clergyman to itinerate through his diocese. Probably the difficulties of the time caused the project to fall through, for there was soon to be a renewal of trouble, and the very existence of the Church in Ireland was once more to be threatened. But this must be kept for another chapter.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE REIGN OF JAMES II.

KING CHARLES II. died on the sixth of February, 1685, and James II. succeeded to the throne. As soon as the news arrived in Dublin, the Duke of Ormond proclaimed the new king. It was his last official act as Lord Lieutenant. Already, before the death of Charles, it had been decided that he was to be removed from that office, and King James at once gave orders that his vice-royalty should cease, adding the further humiliation that he was to lay down the sword of office in Dublin, instead of surrendering it in person into the hands of the King.<sup>1</sup> The act was ominous, for Ormond was "the head of the English interest in Ireland; he was firmly attached to the Protestant religion; and his power far exceeded that of an ordinary Lord Lieutenant, first, because he was in rank and wealth the greatest of the colonists, and secondly, because he was not only the chief of the civil administration, but also commander of the forces." The loyalists of Ireland regarded his recall with consternation, though they had as yet little idea of the new policy which was about to be inaugurated. They were somewhat reassured when it was found that Lord Clarendon was to be his successor, but their faint hopes died again when that nobleman came to the country, and they saw that though he had the name of

<sup>1</sup> Carte, *Life of Ormond*.

viceroys, the real authority was in the hands of their enemy, Colonel Richard Talbot.

From the very first, King James evinced the greatest distrust towards the Protestants of Ireland, and he therefore set himself at once to destroy their power. They held all the commissions in the army, and the soldiers that they commanded were of their own religion. The administration of justice, too, was in their hands. They were the most successful traders and merchants, and by the forfeitures made by Cromwell they had become possessed of much of the landed property. To take from them all these advantages was, from the point of view of King James, essential, and he began at once to inaugurate measures for that purpose.

It does not fall within the scope of this history to detail the various acts by which the King carried his intentions into effect. All this may be learned from any of the standard histories of the time. The details which specially concern the Diocese of Meath are scanty, but there is no reason to suppose that it fared better than any other part of the country. The Protestants found themselves, all at once, unarmed and defenceless amidst a hostile Roman Catholic population. If they were plundered the law gave them no redress, for the new magistrates were altogether in sympathy with their assailants. They soon realized, therefore, that troubles were in store for them, and many feared that the horrors of 1641 were about to be repeated.

Bishop Dopping at this time seems to have resided principally in Dublin. He was removed from the Privy Council, but he continued to attend Parliament as a member of the House of Lords, and his voice—sometimes the only voice—was often raised on behalf of his suffering co-religionists. But his influence counted



for little in presence of the strong opposition with which he had to contend. Besides, whatever he might do to prevent injurious laws from being passed, he was quite powerless to secure a strict administration of the law as it stood, and it was in the administration of the law that the Protestants complained most of oppression. When their houses were robbed or their persons molested, they had no redress, for the judges and juries were slow to convict. Possibly the bishop was not always as judicious as he might have been. We have already seen how he dealt with a dissenting preacher at Summerhill, and we know from that how he, with all his courtesy and real kindness of heart, was disposed to enforce oppressive laws to the utmost, even at a time when such laws were regarded with great disfavour by his own co-religionists. We have another instance of the same disposition in his treatment of the case of one James Lean, a Roman Catholic, who in 1686 opened a school in Navan without licence. Dopping committed him to prison for three months for this offence.<sup>2</sup> We have few particulars, but this, on the face of it, seems to have been rather a high-handed proceeding. At all events, Lean, on his release from prison, took an action against the bishop for false imprisonment, and the latter only escaped defeat in a court of law by paying a sum of money as damages to the aggrieved school-master.

Acts such as these may have been countenanced by the law of the land, but they were exceedingly injudicious—to use no stronger term—at a time when the country was in a ferment and when the power which the bishop used so arbitrarily was slipping from his grasp. It was not the course of conduct that would secure favourable consideration for the rights of the

<sup>2</sup> Dopping. *Correspondence*, Armagh.

Church when, as seemed at one moment so possible, a turn might come, and the party that had long been oppressed would have had the power of retaliation.

The patronage of many of the parishes in Meath—as indeed in every other diocese—was vested in the King. When such a parish became vacant, the policy of the King was to leave the cure unfilled, and the income in the meantime was paid into the exchequer. The first case of this kind was that of the Rev. Richard Duddell, who was Vicar of Loughcrew, and Rector of the adjoining parishes of Clonabraney and Moylough. On his death a letter was at once sent to the bishop, enquiring the “true value” of his several benefices and “whether they are cures or sinecures;” but no further action was taken by those in authority, and no one was appointed to succeed him. The Bishop accordingly, after some delay, “did what was in his power towards supplying the cure, and according to his duty appointed a curate, assigning him a salary according to the canons, but the commissioners would not allow him anything; and though the bishop endeavoured it, and petitioned both the commissioners and the barons of the exchequer, yet he could never get anything for the curate. This was a precedent, and the same was practised in all other cases.”<sup>3</sup>

It may be interesting here to note that there is still in the Parish of Loughcrew a silver chalice which was presented to that church by Mr. Duddell. It had been lost for many years, but has lately been restored to its sacred use by Mr. Harman, one of the gentry resident in that neighbourhood.

In England, the career of King James was cut short by the invasion of William, Prince of Orange, but this event only threw Ireland into a still greater state of

<sup>3</sup> King, *State of the Protestants of Ireland*, p. 221.

disorder. If William could have sent an army at once into the country there would have been little difficulty in restoring quiet without delay. He, however, had neither the means nor the men to do this until his position in England was fully assured. The result was that Ireland simply went adrift. The idea of a United Kingdom had not yet been formulated either in Ireland nor in England, and so the fact that James had abdicated his throne in the one island did not bring as a necessary consequence that he had also abdicated his throne in the other. The party which had been placed in power in Ireland by his policy were not at all displeased at the turn things had taken. They were not only contented but eager to accept James as King of Ireland, and of that country alone, expecting that in this way their dream of independence would at length be realized. James himself was by no means satisfied with such a prospect, for he had not given up the hope of restoration to the throne of England, and his idea was that the Irish army would enable him to obtain his former sovereignty. The progress of events, however, soon put an end to both anticipations.

It was in this period, while William was establishing himself in England, and James was ruling as independent sovereign in Ireland, that the Protestants of Ireland had their hardest trial. Most of the gentry were glad to escape to England, leaving their property behind them. Many of the clergy followed suit, and the parishes were left without either parsons or people. The Archbishop of Dublin was amongst those who fled, and in his absence the diocese was administered by Bishop Dopping, who endeavoured to place curates in all those parishes from which the incumbents had fled.



When James himself came to Ireland, one of his first acts was to assemble a Parliament, and among the measures presented to it was one for the repeal of the Act of Settlement. This Act was one of the conditions imposed on King Charles at the time of the Restoration, and it gave Royal and Parliamentary sanction to the grants of land which had been made to reward those, who, by money or personal service, had aided in quelling the disturbances which began with the rebellion of 1641. That it entailed great hardships on many was inevitable from the very nature of things. The lands of which grants had been made were lands that had been forfeited by the old proprietors, and it was scarcely to be expected that they would acquiesce in a measure that deprived them of their property. But on the other hand, they were men who had taken up arms in a losing cause, and when they took up arms they knew full well that if they failed of success they were bound to suffer forfeiture. The Act of Settlement made some concessions to them, and it was understood at the time that the arrangement then made was final. On the strength of this parliamentary guarantee a large number of the estates passed from the hands of the original grantees, and were purchased by men of enterprise and energy, who set about building houses and making other improvements by which the value of the property was greatly increased. The repeal of the Act was to undo all this, and to restore the lands to the original proprietors. When the subject came before the House of Lords, Dopping was almost the only one who had courage to raise his voice against it. In a moderate but powerful speech he argued that the Bill was unjust to those who had invested all that they possessed in the purchase of estates for which they were assured they had an

indefeasible title. It was not calculated to promote the public good, nor the King's honour. It would be ruinous to trade, and would destroy the public faith and credit of the nation. Finally, it was inconvenient in point of time, for civil war was raging, and it would be more wise to wait until they were quite assured of the possession of the land before they began to divide it. "We cannot," he said, "in this case set a better precedent before us than the case of the Israelites in the *Book of Joshua*. They had the Land of Canaan given them by God, but yet Joshua did not go about to make a distribution of it to the tribes, till they had subdued their enemies and the Lord had given them peace." All these points he dwelt on at considerable length, and concluded by saying, "I have ventured candidly and impartially to lay my thought before you, and I have no other design in it than honestly to acquit my conscience towards my King and country. If my freedom hath given your lordships any offence, I do here submissively beg your pardon for it, but it is the concern of the nation in general that hath made me so warm in this affair. I have but one thing more to add, that God would so direct and instruct your hearts that you may pitch upon those courses that may be for the honour of the King and the benefit of the kingdom." <sup>4</sup>

All this, however, was of no avail. The passing of the Act of Repeal was a foregone conclusion, and when the Act was published, it was said to be enacted "by the advice and consent of the lords spiritual and temporal," though as a matter of fact, every one of the bishops had voted against it. They complained of this to the King, but there was no redress, Mant reminds us that "a different and more ingenuous course

<sup>4</sup> King, *State of the Protestants of Ireland*.

had been followed in passing the Act of Uniformity in Queen Elizabeth's reign, when, in consequence of all the lords spiritual who were present dissenting from the bill, they were not specified in the enactment, which was said to be made with the assent of the Lords and Commons in this present Parliament assembled."

This was not the only time that Bishop Dopping took his stand as advocate for his co-religionists. When the decree went forth for the disarming of Protestants it was found that comparatively few arms were brought into the King's stores. As a matter of fact, all those which were of any value were embezzled by the soldiers. The Lord Deputy, however, attributed it to the obstinacy of the citizens, and was about to issue an order that all Protestants with whom any arms were found should be given up to the mercy of the soldiers. The Bishop, however, went to the Lord Deputy, and reasoned with him so successfully that it was decreed that whatever searches were made should be under the superintendence of an alderman, with the assistance of one or more military officers, and not by any of the ordinary soldiers. This was oppressive enough, but at all events it was better than a proposal which would render it possible for "some ill fellows to come into a house and drop a bayonet or sword in a corner, and pretend to find it there," after which the soldiers might have with impunity destroyed and robbed as they pleased.<sup>5</sup>

Bishop Dopping intervened once more while the siege of Derry was proceeding. General Rosen, as is well known, used the horrible stratagem of bringing together under the walls of the beleaguered city all the Protestants that he could find in the surrounding

<sup>5</sup> King.



districts, leaving them to suffer in sight of their friends who were defending the walls. "The news of this order came to Dublin before it was executed, and the Bishop of Meath went immediately to King James to see if he could prevail with him to prevent such a barbarous proceeding. His Majesty very calmly told the bishop that he had heard of it before, and that he had sent orders to stop it; that General Rosen was a foreigner, and used to such proceedings as were strange to us, though common in other places, and that if he had been his own subject he would have called him to account for it." <sup>6</sup> Thus it will be seen that in times of trial our bishop stuck manfully to his post, and did all that was in his power to mitigate the horrors of that time of adversity.

The churches of Meath were now either wrecked by the mob or given over to the Roman Catholic priests. The details of this destruction have in some cases come down to us, and a few examples may be given. At Lynally, William Sheill, a Roman Catholic priest, came demanding the keys of the church. When these were denied him, he went with a dragoon and broke in the door, and took possession of the building, saying Mass in it on the following Sunday. In Ballyboy also the priest took possession of the church. At Athlone, while the service was being held, a body of about one hundred soldiers broke in, crying, "Come out, you rebels, and we will tear you in pieces." They ridiculed the service, and threw stones at the congregation. The next Sunday they put cattle into the church, and shortly afterwards the priest got an order for possession of the edifice from Major General Sarsfield, and used the building for the celebration of Mass. Ardnurcher Church was also taken by the

<sup>6</sup> King.

rabble, who turned it into a cow house, until it was taken over by the Roman Catholic priest. The same thing happened at Kilbeggan, Ballyloughloe, and Rathconrath.<sup>7</sup>

There is an extraordinary story in connection with the wrecking the church of Trim, which may here be given, not only because it is remarkable in itself, but from the light which it throws on the treatment of lunatics in that age. The case was manifestly one of ordinary delirium tremens, consequent on excessive drinking, but at that time it was regarded as a miraculous intervention of Providence. The narrative is from the pen of Mr. George Proud, the vicar of the parish.

This will give you an account of an eminent instance of God's vengeance shown on one John Keating, a church rapparee, who, in the very act of plundering and breaking of our church was struck with a sudden madness, in which he continued for the space of three weeks; and that day three weeks he was struck mad, died in a sad and miserable condition. The manner of it was this: This Keating was a soldier in the Lord of Kinmare's regiment; he, with other his associates, having often before plundered, broken and despoiled, the seats of our Church, without interruption or disturbance, resolved on Christmas Day, at night, to break and plunder our altar (on which we had that day celebrated the Holy Communion); and to that end he, with two more, about midnight, entered the church. This Keating immediately attempted to break one of the folding doors leading to the Communion Table, and endeavouring with all his force to wrest the door from its hinges, immediately (as he thought) saw several glorious and amazing sights; but one ugly black thing (as he called it) gave him a great souse upon the poll which drove him immediately into so great disorder, that he tore all the clothes off his back and ran naked about the streets, and used all Bedlam pranks whatever. He was put into the dungeon, where he remained for the space of fourteen days, without either meat, drink, clothes, or anything necessary

<sup>7</sup> Dopping, *Correspondence*.

for the support of nature ; would not take so much as a drop of cold water ; continually raved of the spoils of the church, saying that he took the most pains in breaking and taking off the hinges, and yet got the least share for his pains. From the dungeon he was removed to one Thomas Kelly's house in the town, where he behaved himself as in the prison, neither eating bit nor drinking drop, or admitting a rag to cover his nakedness ; and about eight days after he removed from the dungeon, died in a sad and deplorable manner. I was so curious as to enquire of those that knew him very well, whether ever he was mad before, or liable to any such disorders ; they all assured me that they never knew anything of that nature by him in the whole course of his life ; so I think we may very well look upon it as the immediate hand of God.

I dare assure you that this is a great truth, and so evident and manifest that it hath challenged and extorted an acknowledgment from all parties whatever. Neither the Romish clergy nor any of the officers of the regiment (who are all Papist) do in the least disown it ; and it had this influence and effect upon all soldiers and Papists, that from that time forth never any of them were known to enter, plunder, or disturb our church. We have an account that another of Keating's companions at the very same time was struck mad in the very act of breaking the Communion Table, and that within very few hours after he died ; but they politickly concealed it, and buried him privately soon after, for fear it should be known ; but the certainty of this I dare not affirm, but am sure some of their most sober and serious clergy did freely own it.<sup>8</sup>

Acts such as these were inevitable in days of disorder, and it might reasonably be hoped that they would cease with the return of peace, but it soon became manifest that the Church had more to fear from the government itself than from the fury of the mob. The Church of Rome had been for some years steadily increasing in power and influence. Already, in the reign of Charles II., every parish in the Diocese of Meath had its priest, and the whole diocese was

<sup>8</sup> Kin , *State of the Protestants of Ireland.*



fully organized. In 1675 it had "seventy parish priests, two convents of Dominicans, two of Franciscans, one of Augustinians, one of the Discalced Carmelites, and two residences of the Capuchins." It was said that in Meath the Roman Catholic Church possessed more property than in all the other dioceses of the Province of Armagh. But under King James it took a long step in advance of this, and aspired to take possession of all the churches and parsonages. The policy of the King was to change the Established Church of Ireland from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism. How thoroughly this would have been done, were it not for the deliverance wrought by William, "of glorious, pious, and immortal memory" may be seen from the following document, in which presentation is made to a large number of the Meath parishes. The King directs his letter to Doctor Patrick Tyrrell, the Roman Catholic Bishop, whom he had made Secretary of State for Ireland and Grand Almoner to the King.

#### JACOBUS REX.

James the Second, by the Grace of God King of England, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, &c., To our beloved and faithful Patrick, Bishop of Meath, our Chief Almoner, greeting: Whereas the undernamed rectories and vicarages in your diocese are at present vacant, and the nomination and presentation, or the right of nomination and presentation, is known to belong to us; hence it is that, desirous of unburthening our conscience respecting that matter, we, of our special grace, certain knowledge, and mere notion, unto you have nominated and presented, and by these presents do nominate and present, as sufficient and competent, our beloved priests undernamed, to have, hold, enjoy, occupy, and govern the said rectories and vicarages respectively, with all the lands, tenements, tythes, and produce, profits, oblations, rights, and appurtenances whatsoever to the said rectories and vicarages belonging, or in any way appertain-

ing, or which by right to either of them belong or appertain, in manner and form to all intents and purposes as ample and beneficial as the last rector and vicar, or any other rectors and vicars of the said churches, rectories, and vicarages heretofore ruled, had, held, enjoyed, and occupied, or by right the premises ought to have, hold, enjoy, occupy, and govern, that is to say :—

Mr. Luke Plunkett to the Archdeaconship of Meath.

Dr. Michael Plunkett, one of the Masters of our Chancery, to the Rectory of Dunboyne.

Dr. Philip Tyrrell to the Rectory of Lyn and Moylisker.

Dr. William Plunkett to the Rectories of Killeen and Trevet.

Dr. James Cusack to the Rectory of St. Kienan of Duleek and Vicarage of St. Mary of Drogheda.

Dr. William Nugent to the Rectory of Castletown-Delvin.

Dr. Nicholas Fitzsimons to the Rectories of Rathmore and Kilskeer.

Dr. George Plunkett to the Rectories of Navan and Ard-sallagh.

Dr. Malachy Lynch to the Rectory of Killallen.

Dr. John Tyrrell to the Rectories of Kilmesson and Galtrim.

Dr. Patrick Curtis to the Rectories of Clonalvey, Ardcath, and Pierston-Landy.

Dr. William Dease to the Rectories of Kilcooly, Clonmaduff, and Rataine.

Dr. Peter Dillon to the Rectories of Julianstown and Moorechurch.

Dr. Michael White to the Rectories of Dunshaughlin and Culmullen, and Vicarage of ditto.

Dr. John Daly to the Rectory of Kilbeggan.

Dr. Christopher Dillon to the Rectory of Stamullen.

Dr. Oliver Nugent to the Rectories of Armulchan, Ballymargarvey, and Timooole.

Dr. James Plunkett to the Rectories of Rathbeggan and Rathreggan.

Dr. Thomas Fleming to the Rectory of Drumconragh.

Dr. Thomas Dease to the rectory of Kilvolagh.

Francis Fleming to the rectory of Tara and vicarage of Skryne.

Thomas Newman to the rectories of Kilbrew and Kilmoon.

Mathew Dillon to the rectories of Scurlockstown and Newtown.

John Drake to the rectories of Staholmock and Drakes-town.

Dr. Thomas Tyling to the rectories of Castletown-Kilpatrick and Knock.

Hugh Smith to the rectory of Cruisetown.

Nicholas Plunkett to the rectory of Kilberry.

Robert Plunkett to the rectory of Agherpallis.

Dr. Robert Cusack to the rectories and vicarage [of Robertstown and Kilmainhamwood.

James Fagan to the vicarage of Doustown and Castle-cor.

Francis Luttrell to the rectories of Oldcastle and Loughcrew.

James Reilly to the rectories of Moylagh and Clonibreny.

Edmund Lynch to the rectory of Killue.

James Cormac to the rectory of Reynagh.

John Tyrrell to the rectory of Rathconnell.

Richard Nugent to the rectory of Carrick.

Edward Molloy to the vicarage of Ferkall.

John Hoey to the vicarage of Clonard.

George Everard to the rectory of Emlaghcor.

Mathias Geoghegan to the rectory of Laracor.

Dr. John Reilly to the vicarage of Rathmolian.

James Reilly to the rectory and vicarage of Garlandstown

Patrick Dard to the vicarage of Athboy.

James Dillon to the vicarage of Dromrany.

Charles Reilly to the vicarage of Cruisetown.

Philip Reilly to the rectories of Grangegeith and Mountnewtown.

Thomas Reilly to the rectory of Kilcarvan.

Patrick Slannane to the rectories of Donore and Knock-common.

Peter Fahy to the rectory of Kilmore.

Garrett Dease to the rectory of Moyglare.

Thomas Colman to the rectories of Donamore and Douth.

George Fleming to the rectory of Syddan.

Philip Carolan to the rectory of Rathkenny.

George Molloy to the rectory and vicarage of Reynagh.

Entreating and ordaining nevertheless, and by this our firm injunction commanding, as far as regards said rectories and vicarages, as above distributed to the aforesaid priests, and respectively premised to and for them, and all their rights and appurtenances respectively to provide, and letters of collation and provision without delay to execute and expedite,



or that you will order them to be made and expedited, and perform all other matters requisite for the same, such being our will.

Given at our Castle of Dublin, the 4th of the month of June, 1690, and in the sixth of our reign.

By command of the King,

MARQUIS D'ABBEYVILLE.<sup>9</sup>

This document has been given in full because in no other way could it be made so plain how complete was the Romanization of the church as attempted by King James. In a few cases the parishes named were vacant by death ; in the great majority of them, however, the vacancy arose from the fact that the incumbent could no longer with safety occupy his glebe, and had to fly for his life. Happily this formidable document never took effect. The battle of the Boyne came a few days later, and with it the hopes of James and his party were dashed to the ground.

Long before this the whole Protestant community in Ireland had been reduced to a state of panic. They were first ordered to deliver up their arms, and were thus left defenceless in the midst of their enemies ; then the repeal of the Act of Settlement took away from them their estates, and there was nothing for them but to seek safety in flight. Thousands of them passed over into England, and then in their absence an Act of Attainder was passed, which condemned them to death if within a time named they did not present themselves for trial before the authorities. Against measures such as these Bishop Dopping protested, but in vain. The King might possibly have listened to him, and have proceeded at all events with more deliberation and prudence, but the monarch was more powerless with his Irish adherents than he had been

<sup>9</sup> Cogan, *Diocese of Meath*.

even with the English Parliament. The result was a state of things which may best be described in the bishop's own words. The extract is taken from a sermon preached by him in Christ Church Cathedral, at a Thanksgiving Service held there after the battle of the Boyne.

They that fled into England (the bishop says), went away in a hurry, leaving the greatest part of their stock behind them as a sacrifice to their enemies, some part of which might possibly be preserved by the kindness of their friends that outrid the violence of the storm, but the far greater part became a prey unto their enemies, that thursted after it; and then comes out an order in the month of December to seize on all their goods and chattels in their absence, to the late King's use. It was pretended, indeed, that this was done for the use of the people, in case they should return, and the government then in being pretended so much charity to the exiles that they only put them into the custody of the law, till the right owners should come to demand them. But they knew well enough that they durst never venture to lay a claim to their goods, and would rather choose to quit all, than dwell under the power of those men whose very mercies were cruelty.

Besides this, they were attainted for life and estate, which made it very hazardous if not impossible for them to return, and in case they did, yet they were to surrender themselves into the hands of justice, and so stand committed till they proved their good affection to the government. And they knew what justice they were to expect from Popish judges, and Romish juries, who were sworn enemies to their religion, and were not only obliged by the rules of their religion to extirpate heretics, but in point of interest were bound to condemn those whose fortunes they had got unjustly into their hands. Besides this, they saw their goods plundered from them before they went, and no justice done them when they complained of the wrong; and they thought it as eligible to leave the rest behind them as to stay, in hopes of enjoying it for a season, and yet behold it wrested from them at the last, and themselves thereby exposed to the greatest pressures of want and misery.

Nor did we that stayed behind fare anything better. We have had our estates taken away by a Bill of Repeal, our houses

searched five times in a day under the pretence of arms, our fortunes burthened with the quartering of our enemies, our persons affronted in the streets, our employments taken from us, our health and liberties encroached on by the confinement of our persons into close and unwholesome prisons. We have seen our own servants lording it over their own masters, and ourselves under the power and command of such mean and contemptible persons, whose fathers, as Job speaks, we would have scorned to place among the dogs of our flocks.<sup>10</sup>

This last paragraph looks like the recital of personal experiences, and if that be so, it would appear that the Bishop of Meath was for a time imprisoned, which is not impossible, but of which we have no other record. Possibly he may be referring to the case of King, then Dean of Saint Patrick's and afterwards successively Bishop of Derry and Archbishop of Dublin. King was twice imprisoned under James II.

The bishop goes on :—

Our Protestant merchants have been plundered of their goods, and could not obtain the common favour of subjects, to have their goods taken from them by equality and proportion with their Catholic traders, when they petitioned the late King to that purpose. Our Protestant soldiers were first turned out of the army, and then stripped of their clothes ; and those that stayed in for bread were suspected as ready to run away upon the first fair temptation.

Our clergy, first turned out of their churches, and then deprived of their maintenance, because they had no churches to serve in, and though we were left the tithe of our Protestant parishioners for our sustenance, yet the Romish priest found out a way to deprive us even of that, to the great discouragement and poverty of our clergy. . . . .

The Romish bakers in this city did once arrive to that degree of inhumanity that they would sell no bread to their Protestant neighbours, nor could they prevail for any till some of their relenting Romish neighbours sent for it in their own names, and sold it unto them. . . . .

But the seizing of our churches, and the converting them into prisons, the suspending of our religious assemblies, and the prohibiting us to serve God in them, unless a Romish guard

<sup>10</sup> *MS. Sermons by Bishop Dopping, T.C.D.*



were placed at the doors to watch our motions, as it was the last fatal stroke that fell upon us, so it struck the greatest dread and terror into our souls.

It would take from the force of these words to add any note or comment. Suffice it to remind the reader that we have here not the rhetorical exaggerations of one who only knew by hearsay of the events which he records, nor the fancies of one who had to call on his "historical imagination" to supply the shortcomings of an ancient document, but the words of one who had himself passed through what he describes, and who addressed his words to men who were familiar with all that he recounts to them. In after years there were many who found fault with Bishop Dopping for the part which he played at that time, and it has been said that he was a time-server, adapting himself to the views of whatever party was in power, but surely it speaks something for his courage and devotion to learn that he stood at his post through all these troubles; that he spoke fearlessly and eloquently in the House of Lords presided over by King James, when his was the only voice to be heard in opposition to the King; and that he voted against the arbitrary measures of that monarch when his was the only vote that was given against them. The principles which guided his action were really consistent all through. They were misunderstood simply because he was in advance of the age in which he lived. He regarded the Church as an organization whose functions were wholly spiritual and which had nothing to do with politics. Hence, under the regime of King James, though he felt so keenly the disasters which it entailed, he neither deserted his post nor joined with those who by force of arms were seeking redress. His duty then seemed

to be to gain the best possible terms from those who were bent on injuring the Church. But when deliverance came and the time of oppression was at an end, he thankfully accepted the deliverance. The principles that kept him faithful to King James made him all the more faithful to King William. At a time when party spirit ran so high men could not understand this aloofness from party, but one looking back from an age in which the principles which actuated him are more generally accepted, can better judge of his conduct, and can understand that from first to last his attitude was one of devotion to his Church, and a desire to serve her in every way that was possible.







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